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THE INQUEST

SCENE IN PASSING

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

MAMMON

FLOOD

ZAHAROFF

ETC.

CHILDREN OF VIENNA

A NOVEL

by

ROBERT NEUMANN

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This book of fiction, with fictitious characters, in a fictitious setting which I call Vienna, but which could be anywhere east of the Meridian of Despair, is addressed to the men and women of the victorious countries. It was written for the sake of the children of Europe, in two months of their misery in the winter of 1945-6.

R. N.

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FIRST PART

One

IT was a fine place; it did not really look like a cellar, once the eyes got used to the dim light. They must have reinforced it, to be used in air raids. That's why it stood up to the weight when the house came down. It was funny, really. A whole house coming down on its own basement, and not a crack in the ceiling. The real entrance, of course, was blocked. Rubble of masonry and beams and rafters from the roof had crashed down and barred the short flight of stairs that led up to the street. But you could look through between them. Light came in that way, air too. Though maybe you would not have stopped to look. Passing the house up there, you would think it was just a heap of rubble.

Also, why should you stop in the throng that drifted past hour by hour, day and night? It had not been a main street until some other streets were blocked. Looking up from the basement, all you would see were feet shuffling west, or else shuffling east; in sandals, shoes, boots, new military boots, or worn boots, or boots completely worn to death and wound round with rags; men's boots, women's and children's boots. A few cart wheels or pram wheels went by in between.

Also, there was the noise. It was not a street noise as you would know it. Apart from those prams and hand-drawn carts, there were no vehicles. And there was no shouting, no talking either; maybe they had all shouted and talked themselves to a stop long ago. There was just the noise of the throng of shuffling feet. It sounded hollow.

If you looked up and listened from the basement, you would wonder at the way it changed all the time and was the same all the time.

Had you been higher up, the height of the top-story windows of the no longer existing house, you would have seen St. Stephen's Cathedral not far away; St. Stephen's, Vienna, Austria. The steep roof was gutted. A man with a barrel organ was standing somewhere in one of the narrow lanes. You would not see him. You would hear the music. It was the Blue Danube waltz.

Apart from that barred street entrance, there were two windows in the adjoining wall, looking up to what had been the yard. One was gone, and boarded up in a cunning way. Steps made of boards and boxes led up to it; you could use it as an entrance if you knew how. The other window was whole. It was a real window, with real glass and with iron bars. Looking at that whole window, you would think it was the fat old times. Looking up through that window, you would see a heap of rubble, and snow on it. Standing up there trying to look down through that window, you would see nothing. Only after the eyes got used to the dim light down there would you see what a fine place it was.

The two men up there did not stand outside that window. They stood outside the blocked entrance, in the street. All you could see of them was their lower halves. The throng drifted past behind them. Their boots were rotten. They had been yelling for the last few minutes. Now they stopped yelling.

"What's up?" said Yid at the back of the basement, whispering. He was a Yid boy with a long Jewish-Austrian name, first name and second name and all; it was no good for use, it was too long. "What's up?" he said. "What do they want?" He was thirteen, his height was that of a boy

of ten, his eyes were lustreless, the eyes of a man of thirty-five or of fifty-five. He was well dressed, in a fleece-lined Army driver's jacket. It hung about him like an over-large overcoat. He had cut off half of the sleeves so that his hands could stick out. His hands were long, slim-fingered, on the move like animals. "I was in my room," he said, "so I didn't hear them right away. What's up?"

The boy he talked to was seven years old, or nine, or six. He had fair, curly hair, real curls. It looked ridiculous, like a girl. He had wrapped himself in a horse blanket. It looked cosy. Maybe that was why he did not want to move. He sat at the back of the basement on a bench all wrapped up, smoking a cigarette. Maybe he had been sitting there all the time.

"Nothing's up," he said, sleepily. "Just yelling." He looked down at the hand cart standing in front of him. "I thought they'd wake Tiny."

"Why have you covered her with the sheets?"

"It's the old newspaper sheets of last week," said Curls. "Playing at funerals." He lifted one of them. A very small girl was lying there, with a too large face, like a moon.

"She isn't sleeping," said Yid. Her eyes were wide open.

"No." Curls put the sheet back to cover her. "She likes it. It's warm, playing at funerals."

"Her eyes were open," Yid said.

The two men outside started yelling again at that moment.

Curls said: "Just yelling. The district committee man."

Yid laughed quietly.

The legs of the men up there disappeared, they moved off, they turned up in the yard again, picking their way over the rubble.

"They're looking for the window," said Yid.

"Yes," said Curls, sleepily. He did not move, wrapped in his blanket,

Yid said: "If Goy was back from market, he'd settle them. But he ought to have handed in that bazooka. They gave a week's grace for handing in firearms. Too late now."

"Yes."

"Though they don't hang boys. And he can defend himself by saying he didn't know, he can't read. But he would settle the two out there with his fists. He ought to throw the bazooka into the river."

"Or swop it," Curls said, sleepily.

"Can't. You can't risk swopping bazookas. Only to Poles. What do they give you if you are a boy? If you are a girl—yes. But then you needn't have a bazooka."

"Yes," said Curls.

"Goy ought to carry a razor," Yid said. His fingers played a razor out of his inner pocket. He let it sail up in the air. Snatched it. Let it sail, left hand. In the air it opened, elegant as a swallow. He snatched it, elegant. It was gone.

"Where is it?" Curls asked.

"In your pocket."

Curls took it out, laughing slowly. "Now get it into my sleeve."

"That's nothing," said Yid. "Is Tiny well covered? Have I come near her? Now look under her back."

Curls took off the sheets of newspaper. "Fine," he said, laughing just a bit, holding the razor.

The little girl looked at them with wide dull eyes.

"Tz, tz," said Yid. "Like it? Like a little game? Tz, tz. Like a little cold water?"

"Fag," said the little girl earnestly. Her wide eyes were motionless.

"It isn't good for you at your age," said Yid. He put his cigarette to her lips. "Puff," he said. "There. Doesn't even move her lips."

"There is a swastika on the sheath," said Curls, holding the razor.

"Says she wants a smoke; then she doesn't move," Yid said. "Look at her looking at us. She is nearly going. Tz, tz."

"No," said Curls, "she just likes lying quiet. Like playing at funerals, don't you? There is a swastika on the sheath, look."

Yid said: "I picked it from the pocket of an S.S. guard. Same guard who killed my father. I picked his watch too." The razor had disappeared. He pulled it out of his boot with two fingers, elegant. He said: "I'd pick anything." He bent over the girl. "Smoke? No? She is nearly going. Look at her belly. I know, from camp. You can die from a shrink belly or you can die from a balloon belly."

"Or you can die from spots."

Yid said: "There are five different sorts of spots. What do you know? You know nothing."

"She has no spots," said Curls.

"She has a balloon. Do you want some cold water? There. Balloons never want water."

Curls said: "She likes stories."

Yid said: "Look. They've found the windows. Here they come."

There they were, outside, two lower halves of them.

"Open the door," yelled the committee man, outside. He wore the official badge pinned to the breast of his raincoat. With the seal of the Magistrat, and with the seal of the Kommandantura. It was in Russian and in English, or American. Territory under Joint Allied Administration: Civic Executive. Under the badge he had sewn on a large letter, cut out of a rag: "P." Political.

He pressed his face against the window, trying to look down, and said: "Maybe all you've seen was rats."

"I've seen kids. Not rats," said the other man, a Jew. "I've been standing over there opposite watching all day yesterday." He got excited. "I have got a requisitioning order. Have I got a requisitioning order or haven't I?" He started unbuttoning his coat to take it out, a paper with many stamps. Two, ten papers were between his fingers. "No," he said. "That's the train travel permit. What's that? That's the de-lousing certif. You take it out. My fingers are froze."

"I've seen it. Don't get excited. I don't want it," the man in the raincoat said.

"No. No. I've got a requisitioning order for a place for a bed. If the kids can live down there, there is a place for a bed down there."

"Have you got a bed?"

"I had six beds. I had a dozen beds in my flat before Hitler. I have a requisitioning order. There. No, that's the order for the shop. I have a right to the corner shop back over there, Rotenturm Street corner. It's my shop. It's still there. I've come all the way from Theresienstadt Camp to have it back. The man in the shop keeps throwing me out. An anti-Semite. I must have somewhere to sleep. I have discovered this basement and I have an order."

"Open the door," yelled the man, half-hearted. "I've torn my overcoat on those nails. Look," he went on. "Climbing over the rubble for you. Who is going to pay for that?"

"I'm not responsible for your tearing your coat," said the Jew. "I haven't torn it. Will you now requisition the basement or won't you? I'm going to report you as an anti-Semite. I mustn't excite myself. I have a weak heart."

"I can't do a thing till the other gentleman comes.

Don't shout at me, anyway. I am an official. I have been in camp three years. Have you got a pin? Give me a pin. You won't buy me a new coat, look."

"I have been in camp six years. Don't yell at me," yelled the Jew. "They have gassed my whole family. I won't stand being treated by you like dirt. Be careful, I'm an epileptic. The doctor when they liberated the camp said I must have regular sleep or else I'll have a stroke! I'll report you. Who do you think you're yelling at. My nephew is in the American Army."

The other man yelled: "I'm ill myself! I'm ill myself! For three years in camp I have—— Don't touch my arm. I'm an official. I've only one kidney." He started trembling, committee badge and "P" sign and all. His teeth chattered, he was trembling so much. "Look," he said, shaking, "look. There's the other gentleman coming at last. Now we'll begin in a minute. Hi, why do you run away? Hi, Herr Silberstein, listen to me, that's the gentleman coming we've been waiting for. We can start in a minute. Why do you——? Hi, Herr Silberstein."

Fleeing steps were audible, stumbling, running.

"Gone," said Yid in the basement. "No, only one is gone. The other is still hanging around."

"All railway property," Curls said, "all railway property taken away by whomsoever or purchased from displaced persons, to wit furniture, typewriters, telephones, lavatory basins, etc., etc., will, if found in the possession of unauthorized persons after Wednesday the——"

"What are you reading?" asked Yid.

"From the paper. Tiny likes being read to; she doesn't mind what. Don't you, Ty? Don't you?"

"You ought to read to her from the book."

Curls read: "Regarding the use of air raid sirens, it has now been ordered by the Military Government that

the former air raid sirens be used as from to-day in lieu of damaged or destroyed factory hooters in so far as such damaged hooters—— What does 'in lieu' mean?"

"You ought to read to her from a book," said Yid.

"There will be sirens again. What does that mean: 'in lieu'?"

"In lieu is: a cut. In American. You get a quarter loaf of something in lieu of half a loaf. A cut in the ration, that's in lieu."

"It's about air raid sirens."

"You oughtn't to read about air raid sirens to Tiny. Read from the book. There. What sort of a paper is this? A Military Government order; everybody ought to dig graves. Do you want Tiny to dig graves?"

Music was outside somewhere, a barrel organ.

"That's not a tune for Tiny," Yid said. "Blue Danube. They used to play that tune on loud-speakers at Oswiecim. To Tiny you ought to read from the book."

"You took it from the cupboard," said Curls.

Yid said: "Eve threw it out. Eve tears out pages to wipe herself. I won't have it. If you tear out half the pages from a book it disturbs you reading it."

"Do you read it?"

"I carry it in my pocket now. I'll sleep in the lavatory from to-day. I've got diarrhoea. If Eve throws out my things from the cupboard to sleep in it alone, I can sleep in the lavatory. Maybe I'll lend you the book to read to Tiny."

"Diarrhoea?" said Curls.

Yid said: "The lavatory is the finest room in the whole of Vienna town."

"Diarrhoea?" Curls said.

"A lavatory," said Yid, "with running water and a basin without a crack. It is God's miracle. Why do you say diarrhoea? The difference is that with dysentery you

have red, running eyes. I know from camp. I haven't red eyes. I have yellow eyes; that's diarrhoea. With hunger typhus you have blue eyes and spots. Blue eyes and no spots is when they take you out of the gas chamber. I can be a doctor any day. I have diarrhoea, that's all."

"I want to learn many things," said Curls. "I'm going to know everything. Spots and diarrhoea and badges of armies and all."

Yid said: "I can teach you everything. A fag a lesson."

"I want to learn pickpocketing. And film-starring."

"With spots," Yid said, "the great art is how to smear them over with dirt when they line you up for parade. If they see spots they pick you for gassing."

"Film-starring and all," said Curls. "And singing. We used to go to the pictures, I and my mother, twice a week."

"I can teach you how to fight with a razor," Yid said. "It's the finest way of fighting. Fag a lesson. My mother was caught with spots at the parade in Oswiecim. Off she went. Gas."

"My mother," said Curls, "was liberated by the Poles. After the last bombing. Displaced P.'s. She screamed. They hit me over the head and liberated her. When I came to she was gone."

"I must go to my room," said Yid. "It's diarrhoea."

Curls said: "She will come again."

"What's up? What's the matter?" the man with the fur collar and the bowler hat asked the raincoat man. He had picked his way over the rubble, he dusted his sleeve.

The raincoat said: "He ran away. The moment he saw you come."

The man with the bowler said: "They gave me your note at the Magistrat. What is up? Requisitioning? Requisitioning what?"

"He ran away the moment he saw you. Knew you

before, maybe. Those Jews lose their heads the moment they see an official who is the same official who used to send them to the camps, and now he is still there. No offence meant, Herr Kraut, of course."

"Requisitioning what?" the bowler said. He smoked a cigar. He had a fur collar to his coat.

"Requisitioning nothing. He ran away. Run away they would. The Jews. In camp, too. Come back to Vienna they would, and claim shops and all."

"There is a lot of building material lying about on this site," the bowler said.

"They didn't claim shops in camp," the raincoat said, trembling. "Back they come and yell at you. I have only one kidney!"

The bowler said nothing. He looked about. He smoked a cigar.

The raincoat yelled: "I might die any moment if they make me mad!" He started hammering against the boards of the window. "Open the door!" he yelled. It was silly. "Yell at you they would," he said quietly.

The window boards opened, noiseless. They had hinges, a cunning trick. A boy stepped out, golden curly-haired, like a girl. His face was grey in the hard day and snow-light. In the basement you would not see the shadows under his eyes. There was so much black shadow under them, it was like a girl after a liberation by two dozen soldiers. He said: "Hullo."

The raincoat said: "I am the Committee. I have a requisitioning order."

The boy leaned on the window, barring it, pale, polite.

The raincoat said: "It is the patriotic duty of every Austrian to stick together and brave the storm and all, with houses and flats and rooms and so on, in the National interest."

"Yes," said the boy. His lips moved, but he gave it

up. "This is Colonel Grau's house," he said at last, his lips quivering.

"That's right," said the raincoat, looking at papers. "Colonel Grau. He's dead."

"Hanged," said the man with the bowler hat. "A resistance bandit. Austrian Freedom Front."

"Shot," said the boy. "Not hanged." He leaned there, mastering his lips. "I am his son," he said evenly.

Bowler said: "There is a lot of building material lying about. Beams, rafters."

The boy said: "It's our house."

"Whoever's house it is," said the raincoat, "it is the patriotic national duty of every Austrian, while there are people with no roofs over their heads, to make ends meet and——" He stopped abruptly. Nobody had interrupted him, he just stopped.

"Beams, rafters," said Bowler. "Logs, firewood."

"It's our house," said the boy quietly. "This is not firewood. I am just staying here because I wait for Mummy." His lips trembled, he had to pause just for a minute. "My Mummy said we'll build it all up again," he said, "when she comes back."

"Build it up? Build it up?" the raincoat said. "This is firewood. Where is she, anyway?"

"Liberated," the boy said.

Bowler laughed quietly just for one moment, and stopped.

"She will come again," said the boy.

The raincoat said: "Let's get this over. You won't bar my way, will you? Let's have a look at this basement. I have got a requisitioning order, and every Austrian *Volksgenosse*——"

The boy stepped aside, silent.

"You down there alone?" the raincoat asked, nervous. He shouted: "Other people have been seen coming and

leaving!" He did not advance. He just stood there shaking, ridiculous.

The boy nodded. "Five. There were eleven. Six are gone. Gone, I mean, dead. They are still there. It was so cold we couldn't dig properly. But there is no smell so long as it is so cold." He still stood aside to let the man pass.

"What do you mean?" the raincoat said, looking round, uneasy.

The bowler was walking away, wordless, picking his way over the rubble.

"What do you mean?" said the raincoat. "You have no Austrian patriotic conscience!" He did not advance. He yelled: "What do you mean, they don't smell?"

"Some sort of fever," the boy said, listless. "Spot fever. With spots."

The raincoat jumped back, stumbling. He ran quite a distance. The bowler was out of sight by then. The boy was still leaning in the window a minute later when the raincoat turned round and came back, keeping ten yards away. He felt hot in the cold air; he even took off his cap to wipe his brow. "Hi," he said to the boy, hoarse, ten yards away. "Hi. About that wood. I know, a man would buy logs, ten cartloads. Any price. Cash down. No good?" He trembled. "He's got twenty typewriters. American," he said, hoarse. "No good?" His face collapsed. He turned, stumbling.

A cloud was sailing high up. Smoke was rising over there from the Northern Railway Station, where a train was moving in, fifty-five cattle trucks, men, women, trunks, soldiers, spilling over, shouting, vomited on to the platform, a fight, an arrest, a check on papers, seven stretchers out of the corners with seven dead. A woman was howling, or a dog.

The boy with the curls was still leaning in the open window, grey-faced.

Back through Himmelpfort Lane three jeeps were clattering and an armoured car.

Frost rose from the Danube River, mist. The bridge was still down.

A gang of men was digging in Döbling Churchyard.

Crows sailed high up, shouting dreary exhortations, from the wooded hills, down river.

In St. Stephen's Square outside the gutted cathedral five-hundred and fifty black beetles were clinging to one another.

Fags were thirty-seven to the gallon of petrol. Eleven watches were four typewriters and a bottle of hooch.

Three flags hung from the Kommandantura; brotherly.

Stench rose from the bombed square mile farther off the river canal, where it was not so cold.

The boy with the curls had gone inside.

That barrel organ was still playing.

Two

THAT barrel organ was still playing, and the man was whistling the melody. He stood outside the window trying to look in. Maybe he had stood there for quite some time. Then he moved over to the one that was boarded up, and knocked. Then his boot beat against the boards. Then the bolt gave way, splintering. The boards were pushed open. There he stood, framed by the window.

His boots were Army boots, German. The trousers were corduroy, of a civilian brand. The tunic was an American officer's, Air Force probably, without bars or anything;

you could see the spots where they had been taken off. It must have had decorations too, quite a row of them, judging from the discolouring. It must have been a flashy tunic, with padded shoulders cut for a thinner man than the one who wore it, standing up there in the window and looking down. He had a gorilla's thorax sitting tight in the smart outfit and making it look silly. He wore a peaked British forage cap, with a fancy rosette on it.

His face was a face you'd forget the moment you turned away. Clerk, you would say, or a village grocer; a village baker, more probably. Pasty face. Though his eyes were something to remember him by. He was soft in his eyes. They were pale blue and untransparent; produced on the cheap somehow, mass-produced, rejects from a mass production served up on a shallow dish at a bargain price. They were moist, you wouldn't know if it was a sore, or if they were moist with liquor, or if he was permanently moved to tears.

"Hullo," he said, coming down soft and heavy, like a bear. "Hullo. *Heil* What'shisname." He was soft in his voice too; it was a soft chalk voice, voiceless. He took it all in, wakeful: the barred stairs, the windows, the large low room, the cold boiler and kitchen range, the built-in cupboard door, doors leading off to the cellar maybe or to the lavatory. His glance passed over the table, the chair, the bench. It took him quite a minute before he became aware of the Yid boy lying there on the bench with eyes half closed, motionless.

"Hullo," the man said, voiceless. "You deaf? You dead, what?" He looked round, red-eyed. "Shamming, eh?" He looked round again. "I'm looking for somebody," he said, even softer.

"There is no somebody," the boy said.

"Is that so?" said the man. "Okay, you ought to know."

He pulled the chair close to the bench and sat down on it, soft, heavy. He looked at his pasty hand, short-sighted, as if it were something he saw for the first time. "There is no somebody, eh?" he said, and slapped the Yid boy across the mouth with that hand of his. It was not a hard slap. He wore rings. It was those rings that cut the boy's lower lip. It was not much of a cut, no blood really, just a drop.

The boy did not wipe it off. He did not wince, he lay motionless.

"Okay," the man said, melancholy. "I can wait. There is no hurry." He seemed to be settling down to waiting till this Yid boy would make up his mind. Waiting, idle, he went over his own pockets, produced a handkerchief; put it back; produced a folded newspaper; put it back again; produced a pencil stump, a penknife, and put them back. From his trouser pocket he produced a small rubber ball, and eyed it as if he saw it for the first time. He let it fly up and snatched it back, left hand, dexterous. And again; and again again. There ought to be a fellow to play with really, said his eyes; soft ball game. He spent two minutes at it, or three, before he pocketed that ball. "Well," he said, melancholy. "Made up your mind?"

Yid said: "If it is a boy lives here you are after, he just isn't in. He has gone, shopping, he isn't back."

"Boy, eh?" said the man. "And the wireless, eh?" He looked about, wakeful.

Yid said: "Wireless? I don't know about a boy with a wireless. If you saw one come in with a wireless, what you don't know is many people pass through up there through the yard and go out at the back, so that's what that boy with the wireless did, probably. How should I know? I am just lying here because I have diarrhoea. So what have I got to do with your wireless? I have been lying here all the time." He must be running a temperature,

he talked so much. Or maybe it was fear. Though he lay motionless. That drop of blood from his lower lip had come to a stop halfway down his chin.

"Just a boy with a wireless, eh?" The man looked about, wakeful.

A piece of something lay under the table nearby. He caught sight of it and bent forward, sitting, to pick it up. It was a torn-off fastener of a suspender, for a girl to fasten her stocking with, of rubber *ersatz* or something, mended with wire, dirty, discarded, pink. He looked at it, and sniffed at it, and rose, silent.

Another piece of something lay farther off, outside the built-in cupboard next to the cold fireplace. He went over, soft and heavy, and tore open that cupboard door. The cupboard was empty. It must have been used as a drying cupboard, time back. It was empty but for a few rags, girl's rags; scent rose from them and the smell of sweat.

The man gave a short exclamation, like a hunter. He took the things up, one by one, and then put them back, and closed the cupboard, and came back to his chair next to the bench and sat down again.

"There," he said, voiceless. He slapped the Yid boy over the mouth; not hard, really; just with his finger tips. Yid said: "I thought you was looking for a boy."

The man said: "I was talking to that boy because there was a tart with him. Then she was gone."

"You after that girl?" Yid said.

The man lifted a finger toward the cupboard. "Where is that tart?"

"That's where she used to dig in," Yid said. "Used to sleep there. In the cupboard."

"I told her to come with me for a walk down by the canal," the man said. "Then she was gone." He bent to the Yid boy as if to confide a secret. "It's my birthday to-day," he said, mellow.

Yid said: "She isn't in."

The man said: "Where is that tart?"

Yid said: "How much?"

The man said: "I gave a wireless. To that bloke who was with her. Then she was gone. I was drunk. Now I'm sober."

Yid said: "What do I know about wireless?"

"It's injustice," the man said, "I always have to cry on my birthday."

"How much?" Yid said.

The man said: "Ten fags."

"Nothing doing," said Yid. "You know it's nothing doing at ten fags. Nor at twenty fags."

"Fifteen fags," the man said. "I can get a tart for five fags. I can get a tart for nothing. Last week I got a tart with a fur coat for fifteen fags."

"Then the fur coat wasn't hers," Yid said. He lay motionless, his face taut. "It's just to tell you the price," he said, with an effort. "For this girl it would be thirty fags, and a bargain too."

"It isn't fair," the man said. "Say twenty-five."

Yid said: "It's just to tell you the price. There was a bloke the other day gave fifty fags and a package of dried eggs. An Englishman. May I drop dead here and now if it isn't true. Came in his jeep. Just to show you what sort of a girl she is. Healthy as a fish. The doctor in hospital last month was amazed at her she was so healthy. There isn't a healthier girl in this whole bloody Vienna town, he said. That's his words. She always washes. Cold or no cold, she washes; that's her philosophy, that's the sort of a girl she is. Such breasts, you haven't seen such breasts in the cinema. The biggest breasts in the whole district. Just to explain to you what sort of a girl she is." Ah, he must be running a temperature, he was so talkative.

"Where is she?" the man said.

Yid said: "Don't know. Do I know?"

The man looked at his heavy fingers, and slapped him over the mouth. Not much, really; it was just the rings that drew a few drops of blood again. "Where is she?" he said, voiceless, and waited for a second, and hit harder, and asked again.

"I don't know," Yid said.

The man looked at his hand, sad-eyed. He slapped it full and flat in the Yid boy's face. He got hold of his nose and twisted it. Blood came out, not much, a steady trickle. It was funny how the red colour stood out against the white skin. The Yid boy's face had turned white as the snow outside on the broken bricks.

"I don't know," he said, with an effort. His eyes were wide open, looking at the man as he got up and paced the room.

"It's my birthday to-day," the man said, soft, sitting down far off on the bottom step of those half-crushed stairs that led up to the street. "Where is that tart?"

"You can't sit on those stairs," Yid said. "There's beams and bricks coming down hitting you on the head; be careful. There might be the most awful accident."

The man rose and came back and sat down on the stool close to him. "Where is that tart?" he said.

"Don't know," the boy said, white-faced.

The man looked at his fingers with soft eyes. With the small of his hand, like a flash, he hit the boy across the throat. It gave a queer muffled thud, like knocking at a hollow wall. The boy's eyes broke—no, they didn't, somehow they came back again. He gave no sound. But then, how could he? He could get no air. He choked; you could see the skin of his face turn blue. But he came to again a minute later. He breathed again. His eyes were wide open, with something new in them. Was it fear? It

was beyond fear, somehow; beyond death. He breathed again, motionless.

The man said: "Breasts? What size breasts?"

The Yid boy said nothing.

The man took out a hip pocket flask and put it to the Yid's lips. The Yid swallowed, with a pain to his mouth and eyes.

"Schnapps," the man said.

Yid tried to say something, but couldn't. He swallowed. He grinned. He tried very hard to say something. "Free schnapps," he said in the end with a great effort, so low you could scarcely hear. There was a twist in that grin. It was funny, really.

"What size breasts?" the man said.

Yid said nothing.

"What size breasts?" the man said. "That fur-coat tart had breasts, you ought to have seen those breasts. I had a girl yesterday from a camp, Sudeten refugee from Czechoslovakia, you ought to have seen that girl. Right outside the camp wire and nobody hearing, you ought to have heard her holler, and nobody hearing in that camp. What size breasts? It's injustice. It's my birthday to-day. What size breasts?"

The man bent close to him. There was nothing doing. The Yid boy had fainted.

The man rose, soft and heavy. He looked round, furtive. There was a picture postcard frame on the mantelshelf of the cold kitchen range. It was empty, the glass smashed. Maybe it had been worth tuppence time back in a chain store when it was new. It was worth half a fag. It was quite a souvenir. The man looked round, furtive, and put it in his pocket. He left on tiptoe.

The Yid boy lay still, motionless.

That barrel organ was still playing.

Goy came in five minutes later, or ten, or half an hour, noisy, through the window. He had no cap. What with the cold and hard wind, his ears and broad snout and merry eyes looked rosy red like a young pig's head way back in peace time in a butcher's window. His hair, on his round head, was trimmed, short-cropped since the other day when he got himself caught in a de-lousing raid. He was fourteen; he looked sixteen; his flimsy checked coat was burst in all the seams as his shoulders grew. Grow he would on bread crusts, on potato peels; grow he would eating grass; he looked as if he would go on growing and broadening if you were to feed him on earth and pieces of broken brick. "Yohoo," he yelled, pushing the window boards open with his rag-bound boot and stumbling in heavily. The soap box he carried seemed to be quite a weight. Golochowski was his name; Golubinski; something like that. It was Yid's idea to call him Goy; it had a Yid meaning; he explained it once, but they didn't listen or didn't care. "Yohoo," Goy yelled, and banged three, four turnips on the table. "Look," and pulled another two out of the burst pockets of that flimsy jacket he must have started wearing while he was still small and a kid eighteen months or two years ago. "Look, hoho," he roared, and fetched yet another two out of his trouser pockets and banged them there with a bang. "From a trader in Prater Street. I just kicked him in the arse, so he went for me, and me kicking his hand-cart so it overturned, and Skinny picking up what he could and beating it, so he chased after Skinny, so I of course stuffed my pockets with what I could, and he after Skinny, and Skinny back to the canal. Marvellous." He stopped and came nearer. "I say, what's the matter, Yid? Hi, I say, what's the matter with you?" He stepped close. "You smell of booze," he said.

Yid lay there with open eyes, motionless.

Goy said: "There will be a train now every day. There was a swill fight for the swill where the Americans dump the swill behind the American canteen, a most marvellous swill to-day; a guy got shot in the swill fight. Eve met a friend, not a gent friend, just a girl, she knows her from a camp. There's new Americans here moved in to-day, engineers, black as black. Niggers." He was still holding the box, standing there in the basement room. He said: "You smell of booze."

Yid lay there with open eyes, motionless. He asked: "That a wireless you have in the box?"

Goy said: "It's marvellous."

Yid said: "He was here already."

Goy said: "I'll hide it. What's up, hi? You smell of booze."

"Got free booze," Yid said, quiet.

"Marvellous," Goy said.

Yid said: "But not enough." Pain was in his eyes. "I must have schnapps. It's the only thing you can take, with diarrhoea. There is a bottle of schnapps in the little cellar at the back, you know, behind the rubbish box where there is that heap of rags of what we couldn't use of Tiny's brother's clothes when he died last week. So wrapped in those rags under the broken basin you will find a bottle of schnapps. It wasn't for drinking. It is worth fifty fags, like anything. I picked it off a Russian officer, under his nose; he didn't notice."

"I'll fetch it," Goy said. "Under the rags. That's where I'm going to dig in the wireless."

"Worth fifty fags like anything," said Yid. "If I get them to take me in at the English hospital they'd give me schnapps for nothing."

"They carried out lots, out of the English hospital to-day," Goy said. "To the new graves at Simmering. There is room at the hospital, maybe."

"They'd give me schnapps for nothing." Yid's face was taut.

"I can pull you over in Tiny's cart," said Goy. He was still standing there with the wireless.

"Wait," said Yid. "Wait. Let me think. They'd give me schnapps for nothing, so we can sell the bottle we have for fifty fags. On the other hand, you can't get into the hospital without giving fags to the porter, can you? And they give you schnapps for nothing, but do they give you a whole bottle? They won't. They give you a nip. Say four nips. That's all. That's their philosophy. Never a whole bottle. Therefore, the better thing to do is to open our own."

"I'll fetch it," Goy said.

"No," said Yid, white-faced. "No. In case I can get over this without"—he breathed, heavy—"without fifty fags—"

Goy said: "There is some blood on your face." He stepped closer. "Hit you, did he?"

Yid said: "Hit me? There isn't a man in the world would dare hit me. Did he try to get my food cards here out of my pocket? They are worth thousands. They are worth a whole life! Did he dare? There isn't a fellow would dare come close to me." He let his slim fingers travel to his pocket. A razor rose between them, elegant like a swallow.

Goy bent down to him. "Hi," he said, "there's a pint of blood come out of you. There is a puddle on the bench."

"Blood," Yid said. "Blood, blood. What does an idiot like you know of blood? To me, such a man is nothing but dirt." He took out a pencil stump. "Look. Out of the very pocket of the fellow. He didn't notice." His face was taut. "Free booze, that's what the fellow is good for. That's all."

"Marvellous," Goy said.

Yid rose, careful, limb by limb, his face white with the effort. "You can bring me that bottle after all," he said in a light voice. "I want more drink."

Goy went out. He came back with the bottle. They had a screwdriver. Yid tried to open it. He couldn't, his fingers were unsteady. Goy managed, clumsy.

Yid said: "You can't even open a schnapps bottle. I'd like to see you with a champagne bottle where the cork—fft! Up to the ceiling, like flak. With beer bottles it is different again. What do you know of bottles? Nothing. Or gas bottles. They had bottles in Oswiecim Camp—you just pour them through a hole in a room; they are all gone in a minute. Give me that bottle. It's diarrhoea. Do you know the differences? But I know differences." His eyes shone. Maybe it wasn't that bit of booze, though. Maybe he was just running a temperature. "I'm going to my room now," he said. As he went out he turned and said: "Or booby-trap bottles. You touch them and they turn out to be booby traps."

You could see it now; there was a bit of blood on his driver's kit.

Three

THEY made quite an ado outside the window, the two girls did. "May I really come in?" and what not. That was Eve's friend she met when she was out with Guy marketing. Eve's friend was called Adeltraut or something Germanic of the sort, but she wouldn't use that name for a million fags, what with all the Russians and D.P.'s about. "Ate," she said. It was Nordic, she said, but they wouldn't know. She had straw-coloured pigtails, and clear blue eyes with a gaze as tidy as a

German *hausfrau's* kitchen. Her dress was tidy too, a Hitler girl dress without emblems, clean as anything. So was her face, an upper-school girl's face, a bit taut, maybe, but clean; a bit out of order, but even that in a tidy way. Red apple cheeks would have gone with it. Well, then, there was something wrong there. She was so well-washed, but somebody must have done something to her eyes. Somebody must have taken those tidy blue eyes of hers and thrown them into some hollows, or sudden pools. There they were floating in pools of shadow. They looked frightened, in that well-ordered face; or frightening.

"May I really come in?" she asked.

"Why, yes, of course, do," said Eve, well-bred too. You wouldn't know where she came by the fine way of speaking. She was of the generous type. Not older than the other girl; fifteen maybe, but generous. Her hair was generous. It was of a generous yellow colour, half short cut, with a trick of shunning the generous bright red satin ribbon that held it back, and spilling in all directions. Her forehead was strong and steady like a young cow's. Her eyes stood far apart, in a pretty angle. They were brown, and merry. They were not large. Quite good eyes they were. There was a generous broad saddle of freckles riding on her short, merry nose. Her mouth was broad-lipped and moist. It was never quite closed; as if she were astounded, all the time. So you could see her strong, white teeth. She wore a bright blue silk blouse, with two beautiful green silk birds embroidered on it, one on each side, over each of her fine, heavy breasts. Hell knew how she came by that blouse. There wasn't another fine blouse like that in the whole of Europe under Allied Military Government. She wore slacks with it—mechanic's trainee slacks, new as new; she had never worn them more than twice for work, after they issued them to her in that training camp and before she ran away. "Come in," she repeated,

hospitable. She even led the way, stepping down through the window with a pleasing swing of her fine hips and held up her arm, politely, to support the friend as she followed her. They had been together for two hours by then, and were still refined.

"Because, you know," Ate said as she stepped down tidily, "because I have been kicked out before. Remember Ilona, that Hungarian in the camp? I met her again at Breslau. Glogau? Breslau? Somewhere. It doesn't matter. I met her, and she had a place all to herself, she said, a garden tool shed in an allotment; always something superior with Ilona. But when she invited me in there was a soldier inside. Naked. He kicked me out." She sat down, well-mannered. "My arse was so blue after that kicking, I could have made a fortune showing it at a fair at a fag a time."

"Never trust a Hungarian," Eve said, busy at the fireplace. She struck a light, some black stuff started burning slowly, stinking.

"Shoes?" Ate asked. "Jews' shoes?"

"Gipsy shoes," Eve said. "With all the wax on them. And dry too, beautiful. There were lots of gipsy gassings here. These shoes burn like anything."

"How clever," Ate said.

Eve said: "But they stink." She put a kettle over the flame.

"They stink," Ate said. "But they burn."

Eve said: "We have rafters too. But they are wet. But they wouldn't stink. These gipsy shoes stink."

"But they burn," Ate said, polite. She moved her chair close to the fire, to warm her fingers. They were so blue it looked funny. Absent-minded, she said: "What a beautiful place this is, dear. The furniture and all."

Eve said: "Somebody has been at my cupboard, look. Thrown my things about. That Yid again." She found

that tobacco pouch in the end, where she kept the tea, in the cupboard corner.

"You got a Yid here?" Ate asked. "They stink and rape."

Eve said: "This one is the cleverest Yid ever."

Ate said: "If he is your man, I am awfully sorry."

"He isn't," said Eve.

Ate said: "They stink and have short legs. Only thing that is long with them is their noses. They are like monkeys. Like bugs, really. Tread on them. And they stink." She took up the teacup, sticking out the little finger, gracious. "You ought to have heard our senior girls when they came back from guard-duty training in the Jews' camps. The dregs of the ghettos. People who wouldn't know what to do with their lives, anyway."

Eve said: "This Yid is different."

"I am sure he is, dear," said Ate. "Is this nettle tea?"

"It's dried turnip peel tea," said Eve.

"It is delicious," Ate said. Colour rose to her cheeks, suddenly. The tea was so very good.

"This Yid is different," said Eve, swallowing. "I keep having rows with him over that cupboard. It's beautiful, it's so dry and warm you'd think the heating is on. Not a tick in it, believe it or not."

"Not really."

"Believe it or not," said Eve. "And what does he want to keep there? Books."

Ate laughed, polite, silvery.

Eve said: "But he is the cleverest Yid ever. Look at this table. Where does it come from? From the office of the Russian colonel in the Kommandantura. Under his very nose. That's the sort of a Yid this Yid is."

"Smashing," Ate said. Patches were on her cheeks, her eyes shone; that tea was so very good. She could have

drunk herself to death on this smashing tea. She drank it, graceful, in little sips.

Eve said: "Or look at the hinges up at the window. It looks boarded up, doesn't it, but it has hinges. And one of these days he wants to put up a little mirror somewhere; I don't know where really; but he will put it in such a way you can see who is walking outside in the street. And the lavatory. I told you about the lavatory, didn't I? With pull-water. The King of America hasn't got such a lavatory." She poured tea. "He never goes out, so he must be there now. He has diarrhoea."

"With pull-water?" said Ate. "Not with pull-water really?"

Eve said: "I'd show it to you any moment if he wasn't there."

"Well," said Ate, "he might come out. Who knows?" She didn't believe; it was obvious. She even gave a little titter. She covered it up with a little cough, hastily. "There was a pull-water lavatory on the train too," she said, hastily. "Not pull-water really, but a lavatory you could lock yourself in; but you couldn't of course, because there were seven people in that lavatory in the end, corpses I mean. Whenever someone died in that carriage, they dumped him in the lavatory, so you couldn't use it; people are so inconsiderate. Yes, I'll take just one more little cup if you really can spare it; it's delicious. But you could still use that lavatory when we left Upper Silesia, but then the dead piled up. Kids, mostly, of course. A man or two, of course, when the Poles got busy in the train. No women really. Poles are always gentlemen. They just rape." She drank tea, gracious. She said: "I am fed up with corpses."

"That's it," Eve said. "Fed up is the word. They roped me in to see a film yesterday. Not a film to pay for going to, but just roped me in—what do you say? Military police. I thought first it was a round-up for delousing or for some

digging; they with their graves, you know. But no, all they wanted of you was you must go see a film."

"No."

"Yes. And what sort of a film? Corpses. In a camp. Belsen Camp. What do they make a film of corpses for? Is there anyone hasn't seen corpses in a camp?"

"With music?" Ate asked.

"No music. Corpses." She poured more tea. "It is nice, though, going to a film. Soft seats and all."

Ate said: "I like films about things that don't exist. Love and such things."

"I used to like films about the Führer," Eve said.

Ate said: "I like them about real love. Soft love, you know. Not rape."

"Rape is so mean, I think," Eve said. "It's just because they don't want to pay."

Ate asked: "Ever been put in a brothel? They put me in a brothel once, the Russians did, because they said I was a vagrant, because of that house you know I ran away from because— It's a complicated story really. When I broke camp at that Hitler Girls' camp, where was I to go? So I went to that mental home; they had turned it into an orphanage really. I went there by my own free will as an orphan, but there was people who said I was a real mental, out of spite. You know they kill off mentals. We do, I mean. It doesn't hurt them at all, just an injection, and the right thing too for the nation, mentals and Jews and all and homo— You know, men who are after men. But I wasn't a mental, was I? It was only an intrigue, wasn't it, so why should I get myself injected? With petrol, too. They yell for two hours, with petrol. So I beat it, and the Russians caught me as a vagrant at—well, that place, what's its name again. Some place, it doesn't matter. You can't remember all places. They put me in a brothel for N.C.O.'s. But I went away.

I wanted to go to Halle to my family, because I had no school certif. when I had to go to camp with the Hitler Girls, so of course I went away from that brothel over to Halle to do my school certif. But Halle was gone. So the Americans roped me in, not for a brothel, just as a vagrant, and put me in—— Why, that was the camp where I met you. Or am I mixing it up?" She sipped her tea, gracious. She was quite warm by then. "I like love," she said. "And the Fatherland. And beautiful rivers. Do you know the Loreley? There was a picture of the Loreley in a room I once had, over my bed. At Halle. It's gone now, of course. I like great things, if you know what I mean. The Führer was a great thing."

Eve said: "There are Nigger Americans in this town now. Arrived yesterday."

"Niggers," Ate said. "I wonder if they wash."

Eve said: "I don't wash. I've got scent instead."

Ate said: "I don't want them to catch me again as a vagrant. I hate the Russians. They are sub-human. Like bugs. The best thing, tread on them."

"Russians," Eve said. "Russians, Americans, British. I think I am caught."

Ate said: "You tread on them. But they are terrible."

"Russians," Eve said, "and British and Poles and D.P.'s, and Russians. I am caught, you know."

"The Reds are destroying Western civilisation," Ate said and sat there, tidy.

Eve asked: "Would you know what a belly looks like if you are caught?" She got up and opened her trousers.

"I don't think it looks caught," Ate said.

"Think so?" said Eve.

"It's nice having the warmth of the fire on your belly," Ate said.

"Yes," said Eve.

Ate said: "But you don't look caught."

Yid came in that moment.

"That's Yid," Eve said. "And that's—— Was it Ate, dear?"

"It's Nordic," said Ate, "but they wouldn't know. How do you do? We have met before, haven't we?"

"We have. Theresienstadt?" said Yid. "Not Oswiecim?"

Ate said: "Weren't you that boy in that transit camp? What's its name again——?"

Yid said: "I have been to thirteen transit camps."

"That's it, then," Ate said. "You made that racket all day and night because—— No, can't be. They cut off that boy's legs. Froze."

Yid said: "Maybe we met at Majdanek."

Ate shook her head. "I know now," she said. "That asylum, eh? We called you the cellar ghost. You always said something about cherries."

"No," said Yid.

"Must be a mistake then," Ate said.

"Yes," said Yid. "It's difficult with faces. There is so many. I was sorry I wasn't here when you came in. I was in my room, I have diarrhoea."

"There," Eve said, and fixed her trousers. "Diarrhoea. I told you, didn't I?" She poured tea for Yid in her own cup. It was a forage tin really, but clean.

"She said you have a lavatory with pull-water," Ate said and took up her teacup with nimble fingers.

"I have," Yid said. "Did you say pregnant? There is nobody can tell me about pregnant, what with all the gas selections I've seen. All you ought to know is the difference between pregnant and balloon belly from starvation. Or V.D. Or cancer. Or pregnant. If it's V.D., you get spots and stink. If you don't stink, it's tuberculosis. I figured it all out, all by myself."

"I told you," Eve said. "That's the sort of a Yid this Yid is."

"Do you know about mentals too?" Ate said.

Yid said: "Sorry I am a bit drunk. With diarrhoea it is the only thing to take, gratis or no gratis."

"I wonder if I'll go in for street-walking," Eve said.

"Do you know about the kill-off of mentals?" Ate said.

"There is nothing to know about," Yid said. "You just kill them. That's all."

Eve said: "I'll go in for street-walking, professional."

Yid said: "There was a bloke came in who is after you. The one Goy got the wireless from. He is no good." He stopped, and said quietly: "I hate being drunk." He sat down and fell silent, suddenly.

Eve said: "This girl Ate didn't believe in our lavatory. Let me show our lavatory to her."

Yid sat there like a match you have lit your fag with and then you have blown it out. "Drunk," he said. "Or a fever of sorts. Or drunk."

Eve said: "Look here," she said. "You won't let me go out to the yard with a guest, Yid, as we must go to the lavatory anyway. You won't do that to me before the eyes of a guest, will you, Yid?"

Yid said: "It is locked. It's my room now. You tore pages out of my book; each time two pages of the finest book each time, you got round me and I let you in."

"You will let me just this time," she said, "won't you, Yid? Just this one time, just to show her it's a real pull-water lavatory?"

"Even Stalin hasn't a better lavatory," Yid said gruffly.

"There you are!" She begged softly: "The key, Yid."

Yid took half a book out of the pocket of his driver's jacket. "You have taken half of this book," he said. "Two pages, three pages. There. Loose pages strewn all over the place. I have put them together again." He gave her the key, gruffly.

Eve said: "And two pages, Yid? Two? I like this book,

it is so soft, Yid. Please, Yid. These two torn-off pages, what can you do with them, they're torn off anyway?"

"Not these pages," Yid said.

Eve said: "They are soft."

Yid said: "Not these pages. They are an announcement by both Führers, English, American, both together. Listen. 'We, the President of the United States and the Prime Minsiter of the United Kingdom——' "

Eve took the pages from his hand.

Yid said: "I know it by heart, anyway." His voice was faltering. "Never mind if you take it or not. I know it by heart."

"He knows it by heart," said Eve. "That's the sort of a Yid he is."

"I am drunk," Yid said, sitting there.

Ate said: "I know now. You are not that asylum boy. Fancy him talking of cherries! They killed him off, I remember now. Petrol injection. He yelled for two hours." She went out with the other girl.

Yid said: "I'm drunk."

Four

THE funny thing about the return of the fellow with the American officer's tunic and the baker's face was the silence. He turned up again in the window, noiseless. Yid didn't so much as notice him. But then again, that man moved noiselessly like a cat. Like a cat burglar, really. Though he seemed to have come by some more drink in the meantime. By a great deal more drink; he was drunk as drunk. Those soft, mass-produced eyes of his were moist with whisky. Whisky was oozing out of his pores and openings, as it were. You wouldn't have thought a fellow could hold so much drink. Hold a match

to him he'll go up in flames. But he was noiseless. So he stood up there in the window, crouching. As he let himself drop down to the basement it gave a muffled thud; like an apple dropping into grass. It was that thud made the Yid boy jerk round.

"Where is she?" the man said, voiceless.

Yid had a shot of alcohol in him too, had he not. Or it was fever. Or it was just fear that made him do it. He had his razor out, flashing, noiseless too, and went for him. It was all over, a moment later. The man drew in his leg, then let his boot shoot forward. He hit the boy's under-belly like an ace on a rifle range. He must have trained himself to that kick for years.

"Ai," said the boy, quiet; you wouldn't have heard it six yards away. He crumpled up where he was. That was all. It was the quietness of the thing made it preposterous.

The man said, voiceless, complaining: "You nearly cut me." He stepped close to the boy, who writhed on the floor, face downward. The boy's movements were like an earthworm's cut in two. Cautious, heavy, the man trod on the boy's hand, to crush it open. He took up the razor, cautious. He looked at it. Quite a souvenir, his eyes said. He made a groping but steady effort to find his pocket. It took quite some time, he was so drunk. He pocketed the razor carefully.

The Yid boy sat up slowly. He could sit up all right; he couldn't stand up; he couldn't move. His eyes were in pain. He did not utter a single sound.

"You nearly cut me," the man said, complaining, and sat down on the stairs, underneath the rafters.

The boy's eyes went to those rafters; if I could go over and shift those rafters just by an inch they'd come down on him. But he couldn't move. He was in pain; it felt like his guts were crushed; in a moment he'd have to vomit his innermost guts out on the dirty tiles.

Also, it was too late for those rafters. The man had got up again. Drunk, but steady. Hell knew how he got that steadiness.

He took the chair, let it drop sideways, and trod on it. The legs came off, one by one. He took the bench, and swung it back, hell knew how he got that strength, and swung it back wide and smashed the table. Just the table top, really; smashing the rest of that table was quite a job. He started sweating, but went on steadily, a steady worker, steadily silent and so drunk he couldn't look out of those oozing eyes. Yid sat there on the floor and stared at him as he smashed up the place. It was the silence made it so ghastly.

Goy came in just by chance. If he had heard the racket he would have taken his bazooka. At least he would have taken a club or stick. But he came unarmed. The man was just tearing out the oven, silent. Goy took a flying start on him. The next moment they lay on the floor, both of them. Goy got hold of the man's head and banged it against the tiles. He just banged it against the floor tiles again and again.

Strangely, the man did not really try to come to grips with him or to ward him off. He just looked at him out of that banged head with those cheap eyes. There was no sound apart from the head thudding and again thudding against the tiles. All the man did was fumble for his pocket, clumsy, tenacious, drunk. He got the razor out at last, and got it open, but he lost it out of his unsteady fingers a moment later. It skidded over the tiles and came to rest five, six feet away.

From then on they tried to get at that razor, and to stop the other getting at it. They had come to grips now, wordless, breathing heavily, sweating freely. Yid could have taken a hand in this. But with the first try to get up he stopped, moaning. That pain was tearing his guts

to pieces. It was funny the only sound in this fight came from the fellow who was not in it.

The man got the razor first. He let go again as Goy bit his wrist. Yid crept over to the razor, and pushed it so Goy took hold of it. Goy wrenched himself free and got up. The drunk man got up the same second, like a flash. There wasn't a sound to it all. Goy held the razor. They went in circles. There wasn't a sound to it.

Goy jabbed at the man, careful. He drew blood from his forearm. Then he drew blood from the man's cheek, a ragged cut. There wasn't a sound to it. The man withdrew step by step, bleeding. It looked as if he was trying to gain the window. Goy barred the way. Yid too had got up at last, but could hardly move. Goy jabbed out, and got the man's breast.

"You can't do that," the man said, voiceless.

He had his chance, that very moment. It looked as if he was crumpling up, but he just drew in his leg. He let it shoot out a second later, he must have trained himself to that trick for years. He gave a strange, croaking sound of triumph as he let it shoot out, a hunter's cry, it was the first real sound of a real voice for a long time.

As he was still shouting he lost his balance, he was just too drunk. He was standing in front of the stairs then. With that cry of a hunter's triumph still on his lips he fell backward between the rubble. Rubble, rafters crashed down on him. Goy and Yid stood there staring. They were both sweating, breathing heavily. There lay the man covered with brick and dust.

"Fetch that bottle," Yid said. "I must get a drink."

Goy asked: "Is he dead?"

Yid said: "I must get a drink right now."

Goy said: "He'll freeze. Later he'll stink. Must pull him out."

Eve came in, and Ate.

"What's the matter?" said Eve.

Ate said: "Oh." They stood staring.

"Must pull him out," Goy said. "Give me a hand." They dragged him out easily. "He isn't much crushed," said Goy.

Eve said: "Who done it?"

Yid said: "That's the killer was after you."

"You done it?" Eve asked.

Goy said: "We must dig him in."

Yid said: "He's got a first-rate tunic. You slashed it."

"Dig him in; there is pits behind the old bombed sites,"

Goy said. "Dig him in."

Yid turned the man round with his foot. He lay on his back now. He wasn't much crushed really.

"Closed eyes," said Ate. "Always look at the eyes first, if the eyes are broken."

"Was he very keen on me?" Eve asked. She turned his head with her foot, curious.

Goy said: "Dig him in."

"You can throw him under bomb rubble," Ate said. "You can throw him in the river."

"Don't worry your head off," Eve said, unfriendly. "It's after me he was, wasn't he?" She turned his head, with her pointed shoe. "He isn't much crushed," she said.

Yid said: "Somebody ought to watch outside in the street."

Curls came in that moment with Tiny, and with a dog. "Hullo," he said. "We've got a dog! Tiny's so much better, and— Who's that? This dog was sniffing about the house farther down the street. There was a house, but it wasn't there any more, that's where it was sniffing." He stepped nearer. "Who's that? Is he dead?" He held the dog on a piece of stout string tied round its neck. It was a nice dog; it looked dishevelled.

Yid said: "You stand outside in the street and watch."

"Tiny," said Curls, "look, there's a dead man for you. Here is a real corpse for you, look. An American officer corpse. Who has done it—you?"

"This isn't an American," Yid said.

Curls said: "I knew this dog before. It's called Herr Müller."

Tiny let herself fall out of the cart. She was much better really, she was bitter with energy. It could be seen now why she wouldn't walk. Her pair of legs wasn't much of a pair of legs; thin like match-sticks, like a starved babe-in-arms you'd throw on the heap without so much as giving it a separate number. Bitter with energy, she started crawling toward the dog on all fours. "Dog," she commanded. They all watched her, smashed man forgotten.

"Dog," said Tiny. The dog pulled away from her, terrified.

"It's called Herr Müller," said Curls.

"It's for eating," said Goy.

The dog tore itself free and shot to the opposite corner of the basement, panicky. Tiny crawled after it across the room.

"I'll kill it," said Goy. He picked up a piece of brick from the broken stairs.

"It's called Herr Müller," said Curls.

"That's right," Goy said, friendly, and let fly. The dog wailed desperately. Curls caught it by the string. Goy took up another brick. "I'll fix it," he said, friendly.

Curls said: "Tiny can play with this dog."

"Dog," Tiny said, determined. The dog snarled, its fur bristling.

"It's for eating really," Goy said, desisting. "Dog soup. Marvellous." He lobbed the brick he hadn't thrown through the window.

"We must get this corpse out of the way," Yid said.

"Yes," said Goy. "Or roast a dog over a fire, if you have a fire. Or soup. Once we had dog soup in camp. H.J. leader camp. Werewolves."

"You been a Werewolf?" Yid said. "We must get this corpse out."

"Yes," said Goy. "Went to an Ordensburg first, because I'm so good as a Race, something marvellous; they sent us to Hitler Girls' camps to play with them. Ha ha, you know, marvellous. Doctor said I was the best Race ever. Then the Russians came; so they said we must smash the Russians; so I was Werewolves, but not long. Two days. All ran away. Just liberated a lorry, and a shop, then away. That was Werewolves. Or roast a dog over a camp fire. Marvellous."

Yid stood by the corpse, looking down on it, motionless.

Goy said: "Or roast rabbit. Or roast little birds, any bird. Or roast turnips. Or roast frogs if you can catch frogs. Or a roast dog, with heaps of turnips and a sack of potatoes and—and sardines, swill sardines from an American swill, and bread pieces roast in the fat with it. And swill. Once I found three tins of sardines in an American swill bin, as new as new."

They stood round him, listening. But for Yid still staring at it, the corpse lay there forgotten. It was Tiny drew them all back to it. She was much better really, much. "That," she said. She had crawled over to it, and pointed to the peaked forage cap the crushed man had lost from his head. "That," she said, "that," she requested, aloud, determined. They came over, after her, all of them.

Goy said: "Hitler Girl camps, ha. There wasn't such a Race like me in all Germany."

"Someone must keep watch in the street," Yid said. "Curls."

"All right," said Curls, and went out, sulky.

"That cap is just what I want to wear with this blouse," said Eve.

Goy said: "Dig him in right now."

"Of course, I don't really belong," Ate said, "but these trousers would be just what I need ever so urgently. He won't need these trousers any more."

"Who was he after?" Eve said. "You or me?" The nicety between them was on its last legs.

"That," said Tiny, determined. She yelled: "That!"

"There's a rubber ball in his pocket," Goy said, holding it up.

They were stripping him, they had nearly stripped him by then, but for his underwear and bright yellow socks. He was lying there clad in underwear all over.

"My dear," Ate said to Eve, sweet as sugar. "Don't get excited. Who is envying you a corpse?"

Yid said: "Has he no watch, no money, not a watch?"

"Want a soft ball game?" Goy said, throwing the ball to the little girl. Oh yes, they had stripped him.

Yid said: "He ought to have had a watch."

Curls whistled, outside.

"Somebody passing," Yid said. "Hand us that rug, in case, somebody——"

Curls whistled outside.

"Somebody coming," said Yid. "Quick, get him away. Through the back door. No. It's too late. Ai. He's too heavy, hell. Heave. No. Yes. Now. Girls, get out, girls, get out, be gone, all of you."

Curls whistled outside many times.

"Somebody coming right down here," Yid said, trembling. "Shove the fellow in here, anywhere, in the cupboard, yes, for the moment. Good. Beat it, all of you." He looked up out, white-faced. "There," he said. "A bloke, An officer, a Yank. Alone." He looked up out and said: "A nigger."

SECOND PART

One

THE man was tall and slim. He was not quite young, about forty or nearing fifty. It was hard to tell, with a Negro. He was not really black; grey rather. Maybe there was as much Spanish or Yankee or Red Indian blood in him as pure African. Though he still had Africa in his limbs. Wind was in his movements, the great flow, the great old river. It looked odd. Somehow it did not go with the American officer's uniform. That uniform fitted him overmuch, and yet did not fit him. Though he did not seem to see it that way. He looked as if he was aware of that grand officer's uniform all the time. Look, here I am, a kid from St. Louis Mississippi riverside, and now look how far I have risen with bars and all and a service medal to the Lord's and my negro people's higher glory in this democratic democracy.

His eyes said it too. He wore a gold-rimmed pince-nez with a black silk cord. It looked outdated, and out of size, and out of place altogether with his large, generous face and head. He looked as if he didn't need that pince-nez really; as if it was yet another thing he had dreamed of as a nigger kid and had attained at last, gold rims and all. Yet that face was a good face all the same, with a forehead wrinkled by persevering study and framed with strong, neatly brushed, greying hair. Or maybe it wasn't just the officer's uniform he was so proud of, but the two small crosses he wore on the lapels? They were a clergyman's crosses. He was a chaplain.

"Good day to you," he said. "*Guten Tag. Guten Morgen,*"

speaking the lingo carefully like the linguist he was. He came down, and looked round with a clergyman's look, and said: "Well, this is a place!" His voice was an Ole Man River voice.

Yid looked him over carefully. This bloke was not bad. This bloke was nothing to do with the police. This bloke was not likely to display undue interest in an odd corpse. Look at this bloke; he was altogether respectable. This is the place, he had said, having presumably trailed Eve to the very spot. Some of them would fight shy from talking to a girl in the street, what with non-fratting and regulations.

"Yes, this is a place," Yid said. "You're lucky. There isn't another chance like this for you in all Vienna." Those shysters in the street who would trail a girl to her digs before speaking up were the real suckers. A nigger too. Maybe there was a special nigger non-fratting order? Yid said: "It's the only safe chance for you in town!"

The man looked about him, gold-rim bespectacled and compassionate. He had arrived two hours ago, a shepherd, drafted and posted straight from the United States. He had arrived at his allotted place in the desert of Europe and was determined to be a shepherd not just to eight hundred Negro soldiers. He had dumped his things at the billet, and here he was having his first look round, gold-rim bespectacled. So this was how the Lord God's creatures could live and still keep alive. "What a place," he said.

"Yes," said Yid. He was used to people admiring this place of theirs. Anyone would admire it. Finest place in town. Furniture and all. There was a bit of blood near the stairs, he noticed. He bent down and wiped it off with his sleeve.

The man looked on. "Caught a rabbit?" he said. Maybe this blood was not a rabbit's. He remembered his own

meagre childhood days. Maybe the boy had stolen a neighbour's chicken. He was well warned of the deterioration of moral standards in these European parts. Overlook it, yet with a wink, to convey that you were no fool. Be a pedagogue, and a Christian. "Caught a rabbit?" he said, winking.

The boy taxed him carefully. He had been mistaken about this bloke. That S.S. *Sturmabführer* at Oswiecim, whenever he—"Killed a rabbit," he used to call it; his standing joke; and then wiping his dagger on his trousers. How did this Yank nigger officer get by the Oswiecim slang? "And in case we did?" Yid said carefully. "I don't say we did, but just in case—so what?"

The man nodded, smiling. "And where is that 'we'?" he asked.

Yid eyed him carefully. There. No objection to rabbiting, and getting down to brass tacks. 'Where is that we.' That's what he came here for after all, was it not? "She is the finest girl in Vienna town," he said. Thirty fags, he thought. Maybe risk from a shyster ask fifty fags?

"She," the man said, smiling. "Is she your sister?"

"No," Yid said, businesslike. "But I'm looking after her interests."

The man smiled. "She is at school now, I suppose," he said.

"It's all right," Yid said drily. "She is over sixteen, no fear." There is a sucker for you, he thought; maybe sixty fags.

The man said: "Still! It would still be better she went to school."

The Yid boy eyed him up and down carefully. "I'd know of a girl of school age. Sit down right here." And I don't know of any just now, he thought, desperate, and in a minute this here sucker is going to walk out on me,

no fags, no nothing. "I'll fetch her," he improvised, racking his brains. "She lives right next door."

"If she lives next door," the man said, "I might call on her some other day if you will show me where she lives."

Yid said, desperate: "There is a very tiny one living right here. You wouldn't take an interest in her, would you? She is a kid!" He wiped his forehead, his eyes were desperate. "She's got a balloon belly," he said very quietly.

"Why should I take no interest in her?" the man said with a preacher's voice. His eyes looked puzzled behind his glasses.

The boy wiped his forehead. He said: "Or—boys? There are boys!"

"Why," the man said with a preacher's voice. "You are a boy yourself!" He was puzzled. Maybe his knowledge of the lingo was not good enough after all? He smiled his ever-keep-smiling smile, and felt unhappy. He said: "It's you I am interested in really."

Yid looked at him. "Say that again," he said; a smart Yid boy, not to be put out. But he did not feel smart, he felt desperate. 'Say that again'; but all he thought was, the fellow is mad and that's all there is to it. 'It is you I'm interested in.' What was there to be interested in, in a Yid boy? This nigger Yank officer bloke, you took him for a sucker, but he is stark staring mad; in a minute he will walk out on you. What was he after, if he wasn't after fun? "Listen," he said, desperate. "Listen." In a minute an inspiration was bound to come to him, that was the sort of a Yid he was. "Just sit down for a minute. Sit down," he said. The chair was gone, he dragged the half-broken bench to the visitor, sweat standing on his brow.

"It's a bit cold to sit down, thank you," the man said, smiles and all, rubbing his hands like a clergyman.

The boy thought hard, standing there shivering. Cold. Why did the bloke talk of cold? Had he come to sell coal? Or logs? Or not sell, but buy; those rafters outside in the yard maybe? Yes, it must be the rafters; there had been another two fellows after those rafters an hour or two ago! But buy logs, an American? It wasn't logs he was after, then. Cold, he said? He got it now. This bloke was a nigger, wasn't he? Said to be hot like a crematorium down there where they came from!

"Look," he said. "I've got the very thing for you. An American first-rate warm winter tunic for you to wear over this one, or under it. It is cut about a bit, over the breast. That's why you get it as a tremendous bargain. You mend it just a little it is like new. Hundred fags. Well, say eighty fags. What do you say? That tunic is the most tremendous bargain you can find in all Austria. From an American general. Eisenhower wore it. My word, may I drop dead this second if Eisenhower didn't wear it. Say seventy fags. What do you say?" He looked at him, desperate. "Well, say fifty fags." Maybe this nigger would take the killed man's boots too? Or the cap? "Fifty fags," he said, sweat on his brow, "and you get a present on top of it. Forage cap. What do you say?"

Well then, there was this nigger Reverend, gold-rimmed spectacles and all—the Reverend Hoseah Washington Smith was his name, of Jesus Church, Beulah, near Claxtonville, Louisiana, in the United States of America; and now he was standing there puzzled. He felt helpless. He remembered he heard of a man once who wanted to go to Spain, so he learned the lingo, but when he came there it turned out he had made a mistake of sorts, some mix-up of textbooks, he had learned not Spanish but Portuguese; he could catch the words somehow, but there was a glass wall between him and the sense of them, he couldn't catch the sense. That fellow's case was his case.

There must be some mix-up. There was this boy, looking like a kid of ten and talking like a man of—no, he couldn't find the proper age for it, as it all seemed to happen behind a wall of glass. What was this kid driving at?

"Listen," said Yid, "a wireless set, what do you say? No fags? All right, let me have no fags. You can have it for petrol. No, stop, wait. Don't go. I know what you want. Of course you have a wireless already. An American gent like you, what would you want another wireless for, you aren't in business, are you, so what for would you want a wireless you don't want? But I know what you want. A gentleman like you wants a microscope. Some people would sell microscopes without lenses. Do I know about microscopes? A microscope without a lens stinks. You can get a microscope without a lens anywhere. But I have a lens! I am going to sell you a lens. What do you say? Stalin hasn't got such a lens. What do you say?" Sweat was on his brow, his face was grey, his eyes were all desperation.

The Reverend H. W. Smith said: "Do you believe in God?"

"Which?" Yid asked. He thought like a flash. He ought to have known from the beginning there was something funny with this bloke's uniform. The badge wasn't like those they used to wear. But then again, there was always something fancy those Yanks liked to do to their uniforms; none was just like the next. They weren't Russians, were they? They weren't Wehrmacht soldiers. So how was he to pay undue attention to this bloke's badge? 'Do you believe in God?' And wearing crosses on the lapels. Was this bloke a clergyman, a *Galach*? Which God's *Galach* was he? 'Do you believe in God?'

"Which?" he asked, cautious.

The man's smile had gone. "There is only one God," he said quietly.

Yid laughed, dry, just for a second. Not that he cared really. To him, any God was as good as the next. He didn't know about the American nigger God, what sort of a God he was, but anyway, no reasonable fellow would mind a chance to oblige a *Galach*. Only, this one was green! 'There is only one God!'

"Listen, mister," he said. "I heard that before. It's no good. There were always some Jews kept trying it in the camp. No good. A Jew is a Jew. Or if you are a nigger you are a nigger and not an Aryan. God doesn't matter." I am spoiling a deal maybe, he thought, but if a fellow is green I just can't resist, I just have to explain to him, deal or no deal, Maybe I have a spot of fever, he told himself; diarrhoea fever, not dysentery fever, there is a difference. Or maybe that drop of schnapps was a bit too much for me. But I just have to tell him, that's the sort of a Yid I am. Do you believe in God, and not saying which. He looked the man up and down. "You a *Galach*?" he asked.

There was still that glass wall between the man and the meaning. What or who was he supposed to be? "I am the Reverend H. W. Smith," he said, "a chaplain, a clergyman," he explained, awkward, and felt sad, and did not know why.

"Army chaplain," Yid said, nodding. A good job too. 'Do you believe in God?' and no work. "How much do you make?" he said. "Just let me think; don't tell me. If you was in the British Army, it would be—but you aren't, are you. If you was in the Wehrmacht—if there was still a Wehrmacht—you'd get—— But what does it matter, as there is no Wehrmacht? You ought to have been an S.S. *Galach*, otherwise it wasn't a life. American Army—— Wait. You have no ring; you are single, aren't you? You make three hundred twenty-five dollars and sixty cents a month."

"It doesn't matter how much man makes, my son," said the man. "It matters how man lives. If he lives in the Lord, I mean." I am saying this badly, he thought. And he had a professional dislike for saying things badly. "Incidentally," he said, "I am getting two hundred and ninety-six, not three hundred and twenty-five, incidentally."

Yid said: "Two hundred and ninety-six and ten per cent. foreign service allowance is three hundred and twenty-five."

"It doesn't matter," the man said, blushing, and felt he was blushing and hated it. "Foreign service allowances or no foreign service allowances, what matters is if you live in the Lord, my son, if you believe in Him, if you crave for His Kingdom. That's what I would wish you to understand to matter, and not——" He stopped, helpless, and sat down heavily on that shaky bench. He went on: "That's what matters, not those thirty dollars or whatever the figure was." He looked tired all of a sudden, his smile was gone. "I want to help you," he said quietly.

Yid said: "Herr *Galach*, there is one thing you can help me with. A few blank sheets of American Army *Galach* letter paper."

"Letter paper?"

"What would I write on them?" Yid said, urgent. "Would I use them for something bad? I would write, 'I the underwritten *Galach* herewith command the storekeeper of the Americans to give the correct owner of this paper, Herr Yiddelbaum, one half-a-pint of complete milk without water not a drop in it, for a whole month every day.' Because milk—milk! Do I remember milk? I remember milk. I drank milk in my day, bottles. I was ill once, they carried me to a hospital; may I fall down with a stroke here and now if they didn't give me milk. Not as you would get schnapps, a nip, a tot. They gave

it to me by the glass, just to drink down. I was ten years then. Let me see. Nine I was. Four years ago." He said gruffly: "Nobody can teach me about milk." He wiped a sudden sweat off his brow and went on: "There is cow milk, and goat milk, and woman milk. There was a woman in camp fed her girl till she was three, then there was no milk she could make in herself, so she went about telling people if she could only get pregnant it would work again, so she got herself pregnant, but it was no good, the moment they found out she was pregnant, of course, they selected her to be gassed. So much about milk." He wiped a sweat off his brow, and went on: "So what would I use your sheets of paper for? Write on them. I can write any letters. Cadge-letters, love-letters. Once I was cadge-letter writer to a whole delousing station, eighty people, a hundred people; a professor was there, on my word, professor of dancing, but whom did they let write their cadge-letters? Me. That's the sort of a cadge-letter writer I am. Or love-letters. For the Poles. To all the ladies in the village. If a Pole can write or can't write, with him it is love-letters. That's the Polish philosophy. But I wouldn't use your paper for that, *Herr Galach*. Let me have two sheets. I swear I'll use one for milk and one to get there, that's all."

"To get there?" said the man. "To get where?"

"Where?" Yid said. "Anywhere. Somewhere where it isn't here but somewhere else. Toronto."

"Toronto, Canada?"

"Is that Canada? All right, Canada. I like the sound: Toronto. Or Amazonas."

"That isn't a place," the man said. "That is a river."

"What's wrong with a river?" Yid asked. "Or Yokohama."

"It's far," said the man, awkward.

Yid asked: "Far from where?"

The man made a helpless gesture, and said nothing. "What have you got there, in your pocket?" Yid asked, suddenly.

"In my pocket?" the man said, startled. Then he grinned. It was odd how his cheerfulness returned to him, all of a sudden. He was the Reverend Hoseah W. Smith, but it was a nigger boy's grin, not a reverend *Galach's* keep-smiling smile, suddenly. He said: "Calories."

"Calories," said the boy. "Nobody can teach me calories. It is what you die of."

"No," said the man.

Yid said: "It is what you die of. You can die of eleven hundred calories with the British and Americans, or you can die of nine hundred calories with the French, or you can die of eight hundred calories in a concentration camp." He sat down, his face taut all of a sudden. It was that pain again. "Only the Americans," he went on, with an effort, "only the Americans are so used to calories they don't die of them. They can have three-thousand eight-hundred, they can take six-thousand—and they still live." His face was white. "Sorry," he said. "It's the pain again. Diarrhoea. Maybe I'll have a little schnapps."

The man had pulled out the parcel and opened it. He said: "Sandwiches."

"Sandwiches," said the boy, voiceless. His face was livid.

But for Tiny starting her racket just at that moment, maybe the Reverend H. W. Smith would not have noticed for quite another stretch of time that they were no longer alone. He jerked round, and there they were, Tiny and Curls, and the two girls, and Goy too, all of them. There was that opened package of sandwiches on the bench, and there they were standing all of a sudden in a row, as if

this was a show, a window display in a delicatessen shop.

It wasn't a racket, really. Tiny just lay in her hand-cart, and she wailed. It wasn't even a real wail. Whimper-ing, you would say, a token wail as it were, a faint far echo. Her eyes were closed. It wasn't even certain she had seen those sandwiches or had heard them mentioned. Maybe it was just their presence, just that they were in the air somehow, what made her stir. And she worse again, lying there dead-like. It was funny really—that echo of an echo of a wail for food.

Curls said it, too. "Funny," he said to the Reverend Smith, "she got that from camp, sir. They are weak so they can't stir, so they just must wail when the trough with the soup is pushed in, so they know you are still alive. Funny," he said once more to the visitor, polite, explaining, while that nearby yet faraway wail went on. It was the only sound in the room for quite a minute. "But," Curls went on, apologetic, "you mustn't mind her, sir. She is worse again. She'll kick the bucket in an hour or two." He bent down to the hand-cart, kindly. "Won't you, Tiny? Hi, won't you?"

He turned round puzzled as the man stepped close, gold-rim spectacles and all, and his keep-smiling smile nearly gone, and held out one of those sandwiches to the wailing kid. There was no sense in it, was there? The girl, not opening her eyes, just grabbed that sandwich, clawing her nails into it, clawing it right through, just clawing it and holding as much as she could of it squeezed tight in her little hands. And she near gone, you wouldn't have thought there was so much strength left in her. There was no sense in it. She didn't even try to put it in her mouth.

"No use," Yid said, too. "Balloon bellies don't eat. No hunger."

It was odd with that Yid boy. There was some jerk in

him ever since those sandwiches had turned up. From the sight of him you would think there was a strength working in him to grab them, and grab them, and grab them all; and then there was just as strong a strength keeping that other strength in check. There he was torn between those two strengths, and talking.

"Now," he said, "this is a butter-and-cheese sandwich. You take bread, *and* butter, *and* a slab a whole two months' ration of cheese bang on top of it; that is the American philosophy. Do I know about sandwiches? I've seen more sandwiches in my life than——!"

Silly. The others just stood there silent, staring. They just drew nearer, one step, two short steps, to that bench where the open package lay. That silence of theirs was pregnant, supercharged with something you could not tell. What was it? Looking at them you would sniff the air for the stench of it. What was this, the man asked himself, frightened suddenly. Circus, it crossed his mind. Those cages you sneaked round to as a boy whenever the circus came. The stench of wild beasts. Yes, wild animals close to feeding time had that sort of mute threat in them. Sweat stood on the man's brow. The voice of the Yid boy stood out against the silence like monkey chatter, uninterruptedly.

That jungle fear, long forgotten, buried deep in the by-streams and still pools of his negro blood, let go of the man after a second. After another second, he was the Reverend H. W. Smith again, a man with gold-rimmed spectacles and a success in life. Had there been monkeys chattering? Not a bit of it. Just that Yid boy holding forth on sandwiches, as he would do. It was rather funny. Ham sandwiches being made of ham. So what of it. Smiling, the man raised his Ole Man River voice and said: "They are all yours!"

Two more seconds: one when they tried not just to dive

for them, but to queue up. Grotesque. What was there to queue? Just a few kids. But the queueing was in their blood; how can you get a thing if you don't queue for it? And after the second of the two seconds those sandwiches of the Rev. Smith from Jesus Church, Beulah, near Claxtonville, had not just been queued for, and distributed, but they had gone; vanished; been wiped out; there was no trace of them left upon the earth.

It all happened in that complete silence. The Yid boy too had stopped chattering. There was no relief about the swallowing down, choking down, of those sandwiches; no happiness, not a smile. It was "it," the thing; serious as an act of worship; hard work as dying, as very death.

With the more robust one of the two girls and with the overgrown lad squeezed into a bursting jacket it was still quite simple. There was just something solemn in their faces, a dull, joyless triumph, that said: full; got it; closed the trap over it; it's trapped. And, maybe: you damned fool let me get the better of you and trap it, now just try and get it back out of me; you won't; you can't.

It was different with the boy they called Curls, and with that other girl, the fair-haired one with the German plaits. Well-mannered; "sir," he said in every sentence. And she so precious, giving herself an air. And now just look at them. The eyes were all but popping out of their heads. It was the toil; just give them one scrap more of that toil and they can't cope with it. They had grown paler if that was possible; they were bathed in sweat.

With the Yid boy, of course, it was just a joke. Monkey chatter and all, knowing all about sandwiches, slab of cheese here and slab of ham there; and now, as he got his, it turned out it had all been grand talk, all hot air. Got his tongue sandwich, good rich butter and a fat piece of A1 tinned tongue on it, and stared at it, and stopped monkey-chattering, and stared and couldn't swallow it.

For a second it looked as if he was going to be sick, there and then. His face was taut. His face was twisted. His face was torn to pieces. Just couldn't get himself to stick that sandwich into that face of his. And he talking grand about Tiny being near croaking because she showed no hunger. He must be aware of it himself, as he tried his mouth at a sentence—that An American sandwich being worth six fags or ten fags or what not and he'd rather take it along to sell for those fags, he tried muttering. Then he just slammed it into his pocket and was off.

"To my room," he muttered. Yes, he looked like being sick then and there. Off he was, off, out, off.

Ate said: "He's got a room with a pull-water lavatory where you just pull and there is water." Apart from that Yid boy's muttering, it was the first real sound for a century.

It broke the spell. You would stand in a circus cage and face the beasts, and as long as you faced them and didn't move you were safe. But now there was that sentence and the spell was broken.

Goy said: "More," growling.

It was like a signal. They all got moving, somehow, unwittingly. They all drew nearer to the Rev. Smith by just one short step. "More," Goy had said, and the Reverend had had no time to reply when the fair boy—Curls was his name, and a well-bred boy too—lifted his finger to a bulging pocket of the man's overcoat and said: "There."

It was not just a statement; nor just a request. It was an indictment. You, man, by your one second's silence and hesitation have tried to imply there was no more to be got from you, but here I am putting it to you that you lie!

It was quite appropriate really that the man grabbed for that bulging pocket without further ado and pulled

out what there was in it. It turned out to be books, or slim pamphlets; matter in print, anyway. "Tracts," said the man and held out one of them in a hesitating hand. You couldn't tell if he just invited them to verify his submission that this was nothing edible, or if he was really nuts enough to offer them a tract as a tract, there and then, like a clergyman, like a fool.

Unbelievably, it must really have been this, or else that ashamedness would not have crept into his eyes as he withdrew his hand. Ashamedness, if not a little fright. Wordless, he put all that printed stuff back into his pocket. Maybe after all he had really just been wanting to show them it was not contraband.

Contraband was the word. Was there a little fear? A little fear, a little fright was in it anyway, as the Reverend, still smiling, started going over his pockets. "Pills," he said, producing a flat box from his waistcoat pocket. "You won't like them," he added.

"They are of chocolate," Eve said, whispering. They all had moved closer in on him by just one small step.

"Chocolate," said Ate, breathless.

"Laxatives!" the man said, Ole Man River voice, and had planted his joke pat into their faces, had he not? He laughed, booming. He stopped laughing after a second as they did not join in, as they looked at him, attentive, and mirthless, and motionless. He couldn't have said what he was afraid of, but there was that little fear again. "Chocolate laxatives," he said, in a voice without resonance.

Curls said: "My mother used to take laxatives, sir. She was liberated by the Polish D.P.'s, sir." He turned to the others and explained evenly: "They make you shite."

Eve took the box out of the man's hand, earnestly, the bearer of a mission, and started distributing the pills, one

—one—one, three times round, under their earnest eyes.

"They make you shite," Curls said once more, earnest.

They ate them, each of them, wordless, somehow ceremoniously. There they stood, solemn, listening after the echo of the taste.

"More," said Goy.

It was no longer a case of request and gift. Nor was it a case of demand and compliance either. No, it was not a stick-up. It was something soberer, at the same time more tense and more unemotional. It was as if the bodily possessions, outfits and attributes of the man Smith did not belong to him and had never belonged to him, but were the scientific object of a commission sent out to explore and investigate. A commission from which the said man was not excluded either. He was a member on equal terms. And rightly so, he felt, all of a sudden. He too was there to investigate. There was something very much calling out for investigation. Something to be reassessed, he thought, still vaguely; but he would find out. Those laxative pills, for instance, were quite new to him. Or take the lighter that now climbed out of his waistcoat pocket, helped on its way by his unconscious hand. It was quite new to him, it was the first lighter he had met face to face in his life. It was not the hold-up, not the circle of earnest and mirthless beasts closer and closer bearing in on him—it was that sudden newness which caused the faint fright in him.

"That's for me," said Goy.

"Yes," said Eve. "It's fire. That's for him."

"Yes," said Curls. "He likes fire, sir."

"Yes," said Eve. "He'd fire a shed, or a house, anything. Just tell him you want something to burn—next night it burns. That's the sort of a Goy he is."

"Yes," said Goy, and took the lighter.

"He oughtn't to burn things," said Ate. "They burnt a hut once. Jews in it. In a camp we were guarding. The racket they made."

"He doesn't burn Jews," Curls said.

"Never burnt Jews," Goy said. "Cattle, I'd burn cattle. A cowshed. Or things. Or cattle." He was quite talkative suddenly.

"Do you know what I think, dear?" Ate said to Eve as if she was holding a nimble teacup in her speech. "I think it's better to let a fellow go burning mad than let him go raping mad."

"Goy does," Eve said. "Sometimes. Not often."

"Not often," Goy said, investigating the Reverend's lighter, joyless.

The Rev. Smith said quickly: "What's in here? Look. Just nothing. A handkerchief."

"That's for me," Ate said quickly.

"Or for me," Eve said. "It'll match the one I have. I am going to make a pair of undies out of the two. I must have a pair of undies. These trousers rub you up something terrible. I'm sore all over the place."

"If you are sore," Ate said, "maybe it's just gonorrhœa, dear."

"It isn't," Eve said. "A rub sore."

Ate said: "I'm sure it's just a rub sore, dear. But this hanky is brown. I didn't have a brown hanky since I was a kid. It was a honorary hanky I got for my first exam, in German history, in my first camp. It was just the same shade of brown. With a swastika." She went on with her teacup voice: "I'm sure it's just gonorrhœa, dear." She tore the handkerchief out of the man's hand in a one second's burst of violence, and crammed it into her pocket, her blue eyes flashing.

"Never mind," said the man. "Never mind, here is something else!"

"I am healthy as a fish," Eve said, turned to the Reverend.

"I am sure you are," he said. "Now look, here is something else. What's this? This is——"

"The doctor said it," Eve said to the Reverend. "I was at the British ambulance two three months ago. He said——"

Ate laughed, silvery.

"It doesn't matter really, does it," the man said with that faint fear in his eyes. "Now, what is this I discovered in my pocket?"

Eve said: "'You're all right again.' That's the doctor's words. 'You're all right again—healthy as a fish!'"

Ate laughed, silvery.

The man said: "It is a nail file." He gave it to Eve, and told himself to smile, and smiled again with a great effort, and with faint despair.

"A nail file," Eve said, blushing deeply.

Ate stood there silent.

"A nail file," Eve said.

"Yes," said the Reverend.

Eve said: "It's got a blue handle, same blue as my blouse."

"Yes," said the Reverend.

Eve said: "Yes." She looked at it. "It's just the blue." She had all but lost her voice. And blushed all over, and he too blushing under his grey skin, a Reverend with spectacles, a grown man. It was ridiculous.

Eve was still looking at the file. "It's blue," she said very quietly. She put it in a little pocket she had at the front of her corduroys. Her lips, moist, half open, reached for a word, and got it, and turned it out on her awkward tongue. "Thank you," she said, awkward.

The man said: "I am afraid that's the lot. This is my pocket book. I am afraid I must keep this. And here—"

nothing. I am afraid that's all I had in my pockets. Look."

Goy said: "Buttons."

"What do you mean?" the man asked. They were still standing round him, closely.

"Buttons, sir," Curls said.

Ate said: "They say maybe you can spare us some of your buttons."

"Do you mean," the man said, "the buttons of my greatcoat and tunic? I mustn't take them off."

"Not all, sir," Curls said.

"Of the jersey," said Ate. "Jersey is yours, private. And the U.S. brass letters. And the buttons."

Curls said: "And the U.S. letters, sir."

"What for?" the man asked.

"Have them." They stood close round him, mirthless, as he tore off those buttons and metal letters, slowly, one by one, and handed them over one by one, with movements that were strangely heavy, heavy with contemplation. "That's all," he said in the end, evenly.

"What have you got in the pocket book?" Ate asked.

He took the pocket book, and opened it. "A few dollars, look; not much. It's pay-day to-morrow. Here is my pay book. Two hundred and ninety-six. Here. Because that boy—where is he? He said it was three hundred and twenty-five."

"And that stuff at the other side, sir," Curls said. They were standing so close round him he could hardly move.

There was that faint fright again rising behind the gold-rimmed spectacles in his eyes; rising and ebbing away again in a flicker. No, he was not afraid any longer. Why should he be afraid? "This here?" he said evenly. "That's my identity papers. That's my name, Smith. And this here—what is it? Nothing. Notes of expenses. Cigarettes, twenty cents; one dollar twenty-five, repair of pipe. Here. Ten cents to a beggar. Stamps, thirty cents. I like my accounts tidy, that's all. You lose track of all

your change if you don't write it down. That's the lot. What's this? Just a snapshot. That's all."

"A photo of your girl, Smith?" Eve said.

Ate asked: "Are you married, Smith?"

"Smith hasn't got a ring," said Curls.

"He can be married without a ring," Ate said.

"I am not married," said the Reverend H. W. Smith.

"Is it a girl?" said Eve. "Let's see the photo."

"Why are you not married?" Ate asked.

"Here," said Smith. "Here. This is my house, in——"
In Beulah, Claxtonville, Louisiana, U.S.A., he wanted to say, and didn't; it was so far away.

"It's a nice house," Curls said.

Ate asked: "Is that your housekeeper in the garden?"

"It's my mother," said the man. "It's too small; you can't see her well."

"You got a mother?" Eve asked.

Goy said: "Is she a nigger too?"

"Yes," said the Reverend H. W. Smith evenly. "She is a negress too. And her mother was still a slave."

"A slave?" Curls asked. They looked at him, silent.

"Yes," said the Reverend.

"How many rooms have you got in that house?" Ate asked.

"Five," said the man. "Wait. Six."

"Six all for yourself and your mother?" Eve asked.

"I can't see the shelter, sir," Curls said. "Is the air raid shelter at the back of the house?"

"He's got a basement shelter probably," said Ate.

"He's got a garden," Eve said.

"Trees," said Goy.

Ate asked: "Have you got apple trees?"

"I've got an apple tree," said the man.

"One?" said Ate.

Goy said: "With apples?"

"I like pears best," said Ate.

Curls asked: "Have you got a pear tree, sir? Hi, sir, have you got a plum tree? He hasn't."

"Have you got a rose tree?" said Eve.

"There aren't any rose trees," Ate said.

Eve said: "There are."

"There aren't," said Ate.

"Maybe he has one," Eve said.

Curls said: "He hasn't."

"Maybe he has," said Eve.

Curls said: "Have you, sir?"

Ate said: "Where does he get his things from? Is there a shop? I don't see a shop. Where does he get his rations?"

"His mother queues for him," Eve said.

Curls asked: "Do you get cheese every month, sir? Do you get an egg?"

"Maybe he has a hen for himself in that little shed here, look, that lays eggs for him all for himself," Eve said. "Maybe he has two hens."

"Have you two hens, Smith?" Ate asked. "He hasn't." She turned to Yid, who came in that moment. "He's got an apple tree."

"With apples," Goy said.

Ate said: "He didn't say with apples. He's got a mother."

"Nigger," said Goy. "Nigger mother."

"Has he got a rose tree?" Eve said.

"He doesn't say," said Ate.

"What has he got there in that pocket?" Yid said.

"Nothing," said Eve. "Books."

"Tracts," said the Reverend H. W. Smith, and once more pulled the bunch of them out of his greatcoat pocket.

"Books," said Yid. "Nobody can tell me about books. I've got them all. Each different."

"These are tracts," said Smith. "I brought them along to——"

He took one of the small pamphlets and laid it on the shattered table; right on the edge, as a shy visitor would sit on the edge of an offered stool. And then he took that small pamphlet away again, and shrugged, helpless. "What have I come for?" he said. "To help. To educate? Re-educate? Educate?" He said it so quietly, he all but said it to himself.

"Re-educate?" Yid said. "We are re-educated."

The man shrugged his shoulders, and went through that pile of print. "It isn't just religious tracts," he said, listless. "Look. Little books too." Listless, he held up a book with a gaudy jacket. "How old are you?" he said. "Did you say thirteen? This is a gift book, to be given to a boy of—— What does it say here? 'For boys of thirteen to fifteen.' That's what I got, a suitcase full. That's what I came along with." He held it out to him, suddenly hesitant. "Want it?" he asked.

Yid took it, puzzled, and opened it. "Short lines," he said, disapproving.

"It's mostly poems, probably," the man said.

"If it's short lines," the boy said, "it is a trick. If they put less on the lines it ought to be cheaper." He looked at it, mistrustful. "What is poems?"

"What is poems?" the man said. "Poems is——"

"Hi," said Yid, "here it says breast and the next line it says west. Hi! Wire, and the next line fire. It sounds like—like——"

"It rhymes," said the man. "That is poems."

"It rhymes," Yid said, "it rhymes," as if learning the word by heart. And asked: "Why?"

"Why?" said the man. "It rhymes because it is a poem. That's what a poem is."

"But why," Yid asked, urgent. "What's the good of it?"

The man looked at him helplessly. "Don't you think it is beautiful?"

"Beautiful?" Yid asked, puzzled. "What does it want to be beautiful for?"

The man sat down, and shrugged his shoulders.

A barrel organ was outside somewhere. "Listen," Yid said. "Blue Danube. They played it at Oswiecim, on loud-speakers, to drown the racket when there was a gassing."

The man sat there heavily.

Yid said: "They yelled; you couldn't hear them. But you could see them yell."

That mongrel dog, Herr Müller, stirred just then, interrupting them. It had come back with Curls and with the kid and had lain under the kid's cart. Now it came out, sniffing. It was the cupboard it seemed to be taking an interest in, its fur abristle.

Goy took a hand in this. He took up a piece of brick and went for it. The dog saw him come, though, and sneaked off to the far corner.

It was not much of an incident. They all watched it, though, wakeful. There wasn't a sound coming from that cupboard. It was all a mistake.

"That dog of a dog," Goy said, looking at it with slow eyes across the room. He was still standing there half-crouching, with that piece of brick in his hanging arm.

They all looked at him. The Reverend looked at him puzzled.

Ate said: "I know a poem. *Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh, in allen Wipfeln spürest du die Reihen fest geschlossen, S.A. marschirt mit stolzem festem Tritt, die toten Brüder die Rotfront und Reaktion in unsern Reihen mit.*" She said: "It's the Horstwessel poem."

Eve said: "I know a poem." She said it, four lines;

"cart" rhymed with "fart," "ducking" rhymed with something else; she half-chanted it in an eager school-girl's voice much younger than herself. You'd wonder where she came by that voice. Maybe she went to school some time.

Curls said, suddenly: "She got that wrong, sir."

"Me?" said Eve. "No."

"No," said Curls.

Eve said: "It is right. An R.A.F. man taught me. It is a poem."

"No," said Curls. "The Horstwessel one. It is like this." He said quietly:

"Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh.

In allen Gipfeln

Spürest du

Kaum einen Hauch.

Die Vögel schweigen im Walde.

Warte nur, balde

Ruhest du auch."

There was silence.

Yid said: "I know a poem. But it doesn't rhyme." He said: "We, the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain principles——" He paused. "Eve took it," he said quietly.

"Is it a poem?" Eve asked.

Yid said: "Eve took it. To the lavatory. But I know it by heart. Clause One! Our countries seek no aggrandisement—— No, I'll leave that out. I'll start later. Listen. Clause Six!" He paused, and thought, and went on very quietly: "Clause Six. After the destruction of Nazi tyranny, we hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all men, in all the lands, may live out their lives in freedom

from fear and want." His voice was trailing away. He stood there frowning. "Churchill and Roosevelt," he said evenly.

"It isn't a poem," said Eve.

Yid said: "You listen!" He went on very quietly: "We had a Church Parade on that Sunday in our Atlantic bay. The sun shone bright and warm, while the President and I and we all sang the old hymns which are our common inheritance, and which we learned as children in our houses. We sang the hymn which John Hampden's soldiers sang when they bore his body to the grave, and in which the brief, precarious span of human life is contrasted with the immutability of Him to whom a thousand ages are but as yesterday. We sang the sailors' hymn, 'For those in peril on the sea.' We sang 'Onward Christian Soldiers,' and indeed I felt that this was no vain presumption, but that we had the right to feel that we were serving a cause for the sake of which a trumpet has sounded from on high. It swept across me that here was the only hope, but also the sure hope, of saving the world from measureless degradation."

Yid's voice was trailing away, inaudible. He stood there frowning, as if listening after that fading sound. "But you're right," he said evenly. "It doesn't rhyme."

They were all silent.

Two

IT was in that silence the racket broke. The dog Herr Müller had prowled back to the cupboard, its fur bristling. Goy threw that brick. He missed; it went crashing against the cupboard door.

Maybe it was the brick made the cupboard door burst open; or it was pushed open by some movement of the man inside. For the man inside was moving, he was not dead after all, it turned out. He rolled out of the cupboard, not a corpse, but a bulky fellow stripped of that fancy uniform of his and of his boots but still with his underwear.

He rolled out, groping, and struggled to his feet. There he stood, groggy, swaying slightly. The flow of blood on his skull and chest had stopped. He looked battered, but quite alive. He looked like a murder photograph at a police station: Unknown Man Found In Gutter; but alive and kicking. His eyes had a puzzled look; pale eyes of a killer, a cheaply produced article.

"Hi," he said, voiceless.

He was so groggy he did not even notice the panic. They scuttled; it was like mice scuttling for their holes the moment the cook comes in. Eve, Ate, Curls were gone in a lightning scramble; Curls dragging Tiny's cart behind him. The dog Herr Müller dashed after them to the back door. It was too late; the door had closed. It opened for one split second as the dog wailed in despair; then it closed again. It would all have been a joke had it not been frightening. The murder-picture man in his underpants was too groggy to notice a thing.

He was so groggy he did not even really notice what happened next. The Reverend Smith had stayed, of course; the Yid boy had been too paralysed to scuttle; and Goy was such a one as would not think of beating it anyway.

It was he who moved first. "Hi," said the man in underpants, and Goy, with an orderly movement, as if to tidy up a job left half undone, took up that piece of brick he had missed the dog with, and set about smashing his skull for the three-quarter corpse. He set about it in a

friendly spirit; *coup de grâce* he would have called it had they asked him, and had he known the language. He even looked a bit hurt as the Reverend Smith seized his hand (mechanically, the whole thing was not real to the said Reverend at all) and made him drop the brick; hurt, that is, in the corpse's favour. Wasn't this corpse going to have his *coup de grâce*? He took up a piece of wood that had splintered off the demolished table, and stepped in front of the man in the pants and hit him over that blood-encrusted skull of his.

It was a futile attempt. There was no strength in that thin wedge. It splintered like matchwood the moment it came down on the skull. It left no impression, except to make the fellow wake up at last.

"Hi," said the fellow, voiceless, remotely offended. "You can't do that." Yes, he was taking exception to the procedure. Puzzled recollection was dawning in his shallow eyes. He looked about him. You could watch him think. He had started doing a job in this room, he seemed to remember dimly; smash it up or something of the sort. Then something or other had intervened. He had better carry on where he left off, anyway, said his roving eyes. There seemed to be something in him too that was all for tidiness. "Hi," he said.

Yid said: "Listen, you. What d'ye mean rolling out of this cupboard?" Fear was in his eyes. He said, desperate, militant: "What's your name?" Turning to the Reverend, he mastered his chattering teeth and announced: "Never saw the fellow before." And to him, shouting: "What's your bloody name? What's your business in there? Hi, let's have a look at your papers, Comrade, and be quick about it." Fear was in his eyes. If I let go of this for one split second I am done for.

Maybe it was being in his pants what threw the fellow off his balance; maybe all the same he was still

groggy; or he was just mistrusting himself. I'm seeing things. Who knows? I'm soaked with booze. "Hi," he said, expostulating, voiceless. "What d'ye mean hollering at me? I didn't creep in there. If I was in there somebody must have——" His forehead was working hard, thinking against a haze. "Hi," he said in an altered voice. "Come on, you little Jew pig, you dirty rotter. I have seen you before, haven't I? Come right over here. I'm going to——" His hands got working on some strangling movement in the empty air; he was still groggy on his feet, but his hands were all right again. He just couldn't walk over to this Yid. He whistled to him as you would whistle to a dog. "I have seen this Yid before somewhere," he said to the Reverend, man to man. His brain worked against the fog; you could notice it in his killer eyes.

Yid said: "That's what you get for saving a bloke's life." He turned to the Reverend: "Never save a bloke's life if that's what you get for it."

"Save my life? Save my life?" the man in pants said to the Reverend with a gesture, shooing off the argument as if it was a swarm of flies. "Save my life? How did he save my life?" He took in the other man, his eyes getting more awake in the thinning mist, and advised him, voiceless: "Never follow them to their digs. Take them behind a hedge or to your own place, but never follow them to——" He looked closer. "You a clergyman," he said in an altered voice. "Awfully, sorry, Fa-father." He expostulated, meekly, gesticulating: "That's how they would treat you! Hit a fellow over the head and undress him and——!" Wronged; he had been wronged. "On my birthday too," he said. His cheap eyes were awash in those shallow saucers.

Yid said to the Reverend: "Hit him over the head? Who does he say hit him and stripped him?" He was feeling much better. "Never," he tendered advice to the

Reverend H. W. Smith, "never help a fellow; you see they beat him up and strip him in the street outside your window and you carry him in so he doesn't freeze to death and put him away in a cupboard with not a tick in it so they can't come and fetch him and——"

"Who 'they'?" the man asked the Reverend. "Which they? Anyone can say 'they' and——"

"He is a deserter," Yid said.

"I'm not!" the gent in pants expostulated, voiceless, and shooed it all off with a woolly gesture. "I'm not a deserter. I can't do any service, anyway. I'm sick."

Yid said: "His eyes are sick. That's right." He felt much better. He said: "His bloody eyes are as sick as sick."

"What?" the man said to the Reverend, complaining. "What's wrong with a fellow's eye? It isn't his business to tell a fellow on his birthday his eyes are sick." He gesticulated. "His bloody eyes are as sick as sick. It isn't the way to talk in the presence of a priest!"

"Do you have fits?" Yid asked.

"Talking like that in presence of a priest of the Lord's holy Church!" the man in his pants said, voiceless. "What does he mean, asking a fellow about fits on his birthday." He turned to the Yid boy, and said: "Fits! I have a sore throat, that's all."

"Oh yeah?" Yid said. "A sore throat, have you? No one can tell me about sore throats. It's either the plague or the pox. Or lunacy. Depends on the form of the spots you have in that throat of yours."

"Plague," said the man to the Rev. Smith, complaining. "Talking to a man about spots. On his birthday, too. 'Depends on the form of the spots'! He can't talk to me about forms of spots." He turned to Yid, shouting without a voice: "Plague spots in a throat, ha."

"Or pox," said Yid. "Or——"

"You can't do that," the man said, gesticulating. "You can look in my throat."

"I wouldn't get near that throat of yours for a million fags," Yid said.

"Did you hear that?" the man asked the Reverend. "Who cares if a Yid looks in his throat, anyway?" His arms, all clad in underwear, gesticulated. "Spots," he said. "Spots. Ridiculous."

Yid said: "They are digging a couple of pits for graves back out there. There isn't a finer position for a grave in the world. Churchill hasn't got such a grave. Stalin hasn't got such a grave. Luxury graves; priority. I can get for you a priority on a grave for ten fags."

"Did you hear that?" said the man to the Reverend. "Talking of graves to a man with a bit of a sore throat!" His eyes were awash again. "In the presence of a minister of our Lord's Church!"

Now, they both kept talking towards the Reverend H. W. Smith, did they not, who still stood there and had not budged all the time. Nor had Goy, for that matter, ever since that thin wedge of wood broke on the gent's battered skull. Now it was he who nearly bust up the situation.

Why the hell had he to start laughing just that moment? There he stood, bursting out, bellowing with laughter all of a sudden, neighing as if he was a horse. What did he holler about? The gent-in-the-pants? His throat, plague, pox, spots? He was not as far as that. Sandwiches, he had remembered suddenly; that fellow letting us have a go at his sandwiches, and we—woupp! gone.

It was a delayed-action laugh. It was just a misunderstanding if the man thought he was being laughed at. That veil of grogginess went to pieces. There was something fishy about all this. Somebody was trying to pull a fast one on him. Was he standing there stripped

and battered in his pants? So there. He was being laughed at!

He was still weak on his legs, and the boy who laughed was standing too far away. There was no justice in the world; on a man's birthday, too. Still looking at the Reverend complainingly, he lurched forward. "Did you hear that, talking of graves to a man with a bit of a sore throat," he had just said, and now he lurched forward and seized the one who talked like that, the Yid boy, by one of his gesticulating hands.

He did it without a word. He just set about dragging him close. The Yid clutched the table with his other hand, to steady himself, to resist. He had felt so much better, had he not, and now there was panic in his eyes. The man in the pants just pulled. It was like the action of a polypus seizing and pulling close a panicky minor beast. Even the man's eyes were a polyp's—empty of emotion and businesslike. Just come along this way. I'll just strangle you.

The minor beast too acted true to type. Panic in his eyes, clutching the table with his one free hand, he started chattering. "What d'ye mean?" he chattered. "What does he mean?" he expostulated up to the Reverend, his teeth clattering. "What does he mean by dragging me like this? I saved him, didn't I? I saved him!" Ah, five more seconds, one more second, and he will let go of that table and annihilation will swallow him, annihilation.

The Reverend—no, there were several Reverends. Several Reverends were sitting there all in one. One was stunned; he would not believe his eyes and ears, all this racket down here was just not true, in a minute you'll get over the paralysis that has struck your limbs, and shake yourself free from this nightmare, and wake up and be the Reverend Hoseah Washington Smith again, having

dozed off, maybe, in that fine chair next to the fireplace at Beulah, Claxtonville, Louisiana, United States of America.

Another of the several Reverends Smith was not stunned, but outraged, unspeakably. That was the one to whom the gold-rimmed spectacles belonged. He had risen high, through hard work and many prayers, from scratch to the possession of a certain little house in a little garden all depicted in a certain pocket-size photograph. And he was a Minister of the Lord and wore an officer's uniform, the said Lord having helped him to scale such heights of affluence and respectability. You have put up with this outrage all too long! They have managed to get the better of you already, to the tune of one handkerchief, one lighter, one box of laxative pills! It was this box of laxative pills that incensed the particular Reverend. He would not know how to get by a replacement for days, in these savage parts. It just put the lid on it. Walk out of this! Seize your good tracts, and turn on your heels, and walk out of this combination of a murderers' den and a sporting house.

There was a third Reverend H. W. Smith there, though. He stretched himself, like a very large animal rising from its sleep. Yes, it was some odd sort of awakening. What was it again this fluttering Yid bird hollered at him, entreating? 'I saved him, didn't I?' "Sure you saved him," said this man Smith slowly, with the great voice of the great old rivers of a far continent he had never seen. Strangely gay, he repeated: "Sure you saved this here guy's life, son."

And now he took a receptacle from his hip pocket, which he had cunningly managed to save from the general pocket search, and opened it, and took off those gold-rimmed glasses with a slow, sure movement, and looked at them for a moment as if he had never seen them

before, and put them in that receptacle, and let it snap to. It sounded so definite as it snapped to, as if a door were falling to on a stranger who would not return.

The eyes appearing behind those spectacles were a bit tired, as eyes would be if you summoned them unawares to stand up all for themselves without a gadget; and had been proud of that gadget almost for a lifetime. They were smiling, those eyes were; not just at you, though; not with a professional ever-keep-smiling smile. They were asmile in an impersonal way, turned inward, or at something far off. "Sure you saved this here guy's life, son," said the Reverend. "You bet you did. Haven't I been standing by watching?"

"You what?" the man in the pants asked.

"Haven't I been standing by watching as they hurled themselves on you from behind while you was standing up there outside looking down, and hit you over the head?"

"Who—they?" the polypus said. He still clutched the Yid boy's hand, but as you would hold a thing, a utensil, half forgotten. He asked, voiceless: "Hit me over the head?"

"They sure did," said Smith. "Look at that bloody blood on your head, look at it. There you are! Who did it? The devils did it."

"Devils?" said the man in underwear. "Which? Red Devils, British Commandos? Blue Devils, Spanish Division, D.P.'s, or what?" He let go of that thing, a Yid boy's hand, and felt his head. "Not Italian Black Devil Specials, surely?" he asked, pleading.

"Devils," said Smith. "Just devils, that's all."

"Just devils, just devils," the man said, shooing it off with hazy movements as if it was a swarm of flies. "Just devils. Dirty nigger." His voice changed. "Really?" he said, pleading. "Not really, say? You mean just seeing

devils, eh? Seeing devils like seeing white mice, like a dipsomaniac?"

"I mean devils like devils," said the Reverend H. W. Smith.

The man shooed it off. "Telling a fellow about devils," he said, complaining. "On his birthday, too. Telling a fellow about dipso and spots and things." He was outraged. "Dirty nigger," he said once more, without conviction, just to hear himself say it. He was quite soft again. His eyes were awash, he was so hurt. He said: "Spots! You can look in my throat if you like if there are spots."

"Sure," said Smith, and stepped close to him, right within reach of those pale baker's hands, dough-kneader's and strangler's hands, and stepped close, gaily. And looked into the man's yawning mouth. And said, with that new gay voice: "There isn't a spot in it!"

"Not a spot, eh?" said the man.

Smith said: "You are as fit as a fish. There isn't a spot."

"Not a spot," said the man. He turned round, to Goy, and said: "Heard that? Heard that?" He said to the Yid boy: "Heard that? There isn't a spot in it!"

Smith said: "Maybe there were some, and they have gone."

"Not a spot," said the man in pants.

Smith said: "By the mercy of our Lord, who rewards the good."

"Good, eh?" said the man. He turned to Yid. "Heard that?" His eyes were soft. "I am really good, you know," he said, voiceless.

Smith nodded. "I know you are," he said quietly.

"I am really good," said the man in pants. "Sometimes"—his arms made those shooing movements—"sometimes there can be a little misunderstanding, can't there be? Can't there be? But"—he fumbled for a hanky, and

noticed he was in his underwear, and wiped his forehead with his underwear-covered arm—"but I am really good, you know," he said as if he was telling a secret. "Some wouldn't know," he said. "Some would think— There was a fellow at the— Well, I don't mind. You won't tell, will you. I was an S.S. man once. The uniform I now wear, or wore? Just off a Yank airman. But he was dead. I didn't kill him for the uniform. There was a *Kamerad* saw him bale out and killed him. I just took the tunic, that's all. War was nearly over then, so I just took the tunic in case I'd want to beat it some day." He wiped his forehead. "I was an S.S. man and I was good."

"Sure you were," said Smith.

"Yes," said the man. "I wouldn't tell you if you wasn't a clergyman. You are not allowed to spill!" He made that gesture. "These boys don't count. They're just kids. They're just dirt. It's you I'm talking to because you are—!" He expostulated. "Some people maybe believe more in God than a hundred thousand bloody niggers all thrown together."

"Sure," said Smith.

"Sure, sure," the man in pants said, apeing him, voiceless. "There's no mucking nigger blackfrock in the world has done so much good as I did with the S.S." He wiped the sweat off his brow. "I've given them shoes," he said. "I've given shoes to thousands of them, kid shoes, to thousands of kids. At Majdanek Camp, you know." He chuckled. "I was stores collector. So I gave them shoes. Kids come without shoes to the camp, most of them, because—well, you know, they had to walk, so most of them came without shoes. You know what kids' shoes are like. You can walk a mile in kids' shoes—say ten miles. But once you walk two hundred and fifty miles, three hundred and fifty miles, there's nothing left of a shoe of such a kid. Not a scrap of it. So they came without

shoes to Majdanek. So I gave them shoes! From my stores! To all the kiddies what had no shoes!" He wiped his forehead. "That's the sort of a bloke I am, Fa-father."

The Rev. Smith looked at him. "Sure," he said quietly.

The man chuckled. "Of course I got them back an hour later. At the crematorium."

"Yes," said Smith.

The man said in a flat voice: "Because, of course, they went straight to the crematorium, the kids did."

"Yes," said Smith.

"I couldn't have given them the shoes otherwise, could I? Stores is stores!"

"Yes," said the Reverend. "Yes. Oh. Yes. Yes."

The man said: "But for that one hour they had good shoes!"

"Yes," said the Reverend.

The man said: "You ought to have seen the kiddies. How they liked them. Their mothers too."

"Yes," said Smith.

The man did a shooing gesture, shooing off all those flies. "Of course," he said, voiceless, "there were of course some who would say it was just my joke." He wiped the sweat off his forehead. "But it was just goodness. I was just good!" He paused, and asked, unsteadily: "Was I good?"

"You were," said Smith.

The man said: "I like kiddies."

"Yes," said Smith.

The man said: "Yes." He looked round. "I am a case," he said.

"Yes," said Smith.

The man said: "There hasn't been such a case like me in a hundred years. There isn't such a case like me at all—you can ask all doctors and professors and whatnot, every single doctor, if there is such a case like me." He

looked round, irritated. "That's the sort of a case I am," he said. "Once it gets me it gets me. Or with a lady, say. There isn't such a passion with a lady in the whole of——" He did that fly shooping movement, irritated by something invisible.

Smith said: "Maybe you want to go home now, brother."

The man said: "There isn't such a passion like mine with a lady in the whole world."

"Brother," said the Reverend H. W. Smith. "Come right over here, brother. Right over here." He laid his arm round the man's shoulder. "Brother," he said. "We must clothe ye before ye go away, brother."

The man quietened under his contact, and leaned against him. "You really think I am good," he said. "You really think maybe I believe in God?"

The other one shook his head. "Not think," he said. "Not maybe. I know it."

The man leaned against him. There he was leaning against him in his underpants. It was ridiculous.

"You'll be wanting your clothes to go away in," said Smith.

"There isn't any clothes," said Yid, quickly. "What do I know about clothes, considering we brought him in stripped?"

"Give him his clothes," said Smith.

"There isn't any clothes," said Yid.

"Give him his clothes," said Smith.

Yid said: "Nothing doing."

Smith started unbuttoning his tunic, what buttons were left to it, to take it off.

"What d'ye mean?" Yid said. "What are you doing?"

Smith went on, wordless.

"Hi," Yid said. "What are you doing? I say we haven't got this bloke's clothes!"

Smith nodded. "That's why," he said, gaily, holding his tunic out to the man in pants.

Yid stepped in between. He gave a nod to Goy, angry.

Goy went, and came back and brought the man's tunic, trousers, boots.

"We collected them in the street," Yid said, angry. "We saved them. What d'ye mean making us spit out these clothes for nothing?"

It was funny how the fellow took those clothes one by one, and put them on, awkward. It was as if his hands were asleep as he put them on.

"First-rate stuff," Yid said, gruffly. "Look at this; tunic like new. Look. Who do you think we are can give away stuff like this."

"I'll pay?" said the man with a heavy tongue.

"What 'ye want to pay with," Yid said, bitter. "Come back to-morrow and bring it, eh? Pay is here and now. If it isn't here and now it isn't worth a belch."

"I've got it on me," said the man.

Yid laughed, bitter. "A stink you've got on you. That's what you have got on you."

The man shook his head. Those shallow, cheap eyes of his were far away. He pulled back the underwear sleeve off his left wrist. It turned out a wrist watch was underneath; he'd worn a watch and they never discovered it! A lady's wristlet watch it was, silver. He took it off, and gave it to the boy, his eyes far away.

Yid stood so stunned you'd knock him down with your finger tip. "You been wearing this watch, all the time?" he said. He turned to Goy. "He been wearing this watch hid under his underwear!" He laughed, bitter, and said, ill-humoured: "What sort of a watch is it, anyway? Not much of a watch!" He looked at it closely. He snapped: "Glass is cracked."

The man's eyes were mellow. He pulled the sleeve of

his underwear higher up off his wrist. There was another watch he wore an inch higher up. "Like this one better?" he asked quietly. His eyes were far away. He pulled up his sleeve, higher, and still higher. "Or one of these?" There were four, five, six more watches. His eyes were so far away they were nearly in Heaven.

Yid's face had gone very pale. He said not a word.

"You want to go home now, brother," said the Reverend Smith.

"Yes," said the man.

Yid said, desperate: "For these here watches I can give you a wireless and a lens of a microscope."

He got no answer. The man had turned round that moment, awkward. Eve had come in. Maybe she had listened; and it was quite safe by now, wasn't it? And it was the bloke, anyway, who had been after her; so why not?

"Hullo," she said. She walked the tarts' way; her face was made up fresh. "Hullo, everybody," she said, husky.

The man stood there half turned, motionless, and stood there staring. There was a hush and silence going out from that stare, and crept at them all, like a sheet of fog.

"What's the matter?" said Eve with her tart's voice. And gave it up, a moment later, and stood there, foolish.

The Reverend H. W. Smith laid his arm round the man's half-turned shoulder. "You want to go home now," he said, quiet and powerful. He had his arm round the man's shoulder, heavily. So he led him out.

You could see the man leave, stumbling, not turning, in a sleep-walker's or drunkard's gait. And go away. And be gone.

•

Three

"HA," said Goy.

"Ha-ha," said Eve, looking after the fellow as his stumbling boots disappeared up in the street.

"Ha-ha-ha," said Yid.

"Ha-ha-ha-ha," said Goy.

Yid said: "I'm good!" He nudged the Rev. Smith in the ribs, pally, and announced: "There isn't such a case as the case of a case I am!" He burst out laughing, oh, they all burst out laughing.

"What's the matter?" asked Ate, coming in on them.

Yid said: "Devils hitting you on the head!" He fumbled in his pocket, suddenly. "This seems to be yours, Smith, incidentally," he said with nonchalance and handed his pocket-book back to the Reverend.

"Hi, what's that?" said Smith. "I hadn't missed it."

"Check up to see there is nothing missing," Eve counselled him.

"No need to check up," Yid said, pale and haughty. "It's complete."

Ate laughed, silvery.

"Check up," Eve said.

"There is nothing missing," said Smith. "Not a thing. Identity papers, notes, pay-book, everything." He hesitated. "It's two hundred and ninety-six, incidentally. Not three hundred and twenty-five and sixty cents. Just to put it on record. Though it doesn't matter really. Foreign service allowance. It's silly. I can't claim it retrospective."

"You can," Yid said.

"It doesn't matter," said Smith. He banged his hand on the table. "Hell," he said. "Hell and hell. Thirty

United States silver dollars a month and I never thought of it." He pushed his cap out of the forehead; it came to rest far back on his skull, jaunty. "Hell and hell and hell," he said with his Ole Man River voice, and pushed that cap back in front; it fell over his eyes.

"You lied, didn't you?" Yid said. "About those devils and all, and having seen them, Smith! How does it feel for a *Galach* to have lied?"

"He hasn't lied," Eve said.

"Were you in here?" said Yid. "Then shut up. He has lied for us." He turned back to the man whose cap still sat over his eyes, jaunty. "How does it feel for a *Galach* to have lied?"

The man pushed his cap back just enough to free his eyes, and looked at him. "It feels fine," he said, steadily.

Yid said: "If you hadn't propped him up he'd have dropped. Funny, that fellow leaning against you as if you was a mother." He paused, thinking. "Funny," he said, quietly.

Ate said: "Where do you go, back home when you stay in that picture-house, where do you go when you want a girl?"

"He goes nowhere," Eve said.

The man looked at her. "Once when I was up in New York," he said evenly, "once up in New York I borrowed an outfit from the valet at the hotel, mufti outfit, you know, soft collar and a smart tie and all, and went to a sporting house."

Ate started twittering for a moment, silvery.

"Aw, shut up," Yid said, fiercely.

"Have you got a rose tree?" Eve asked.

Yid said: "Aw, shut up." His brow was furrowed, he stood there thinking. "Ever killed a man?" he asked, quietly.

"No," said the Rev. Smith. "No." He was thinking

hard. "Once," he said in an undertone, "there was a dead end kid like me, black coloured kid, St. Louis, Mississippi, you wouldn't know. A black negro boy. He had a tricycle, that kid had. Don't know where he got it from. Maybe his father stole it for him. I broke that tricycle. He fell ill—the boy, I mean. I don't know what happened of him. I know I never saw him again. If that kid died——" He fell silent.

"Steel tricycle?" Ate asked. "What make?"

Yid said: "That's the sort of kill they can't convict you."

"What make tricycle?" Ate asked. "I had a tricycle."

The man shook his head. "That's the sort of kill gives you a life sentence," he said quietly.

Eve sat down next to him, and put her hand on his knee, and looked at him.

Ate said: "I had a steel tricycle, with green enamel handles. At Halle. That's the green handles they can only make at Halle so beautiful. I used to tricycle to school on that tricycle; I was a little girl then. That was still before the Poles attacked us."

"Ha," said Yid.

"Nineteen thirty-nine the Poles attacked National Socialist Germany, with the help of the Jews," said Ate. "I've always been number one of my form."

Eve said: "My dad brought me to school leading me by the hand. He wouldn't have gone by tricycle for anything, green handles or no green handles. Nun school. I was to be a nun."

"At school," Goy said. "I once kicked a teacher at school, ha."

Yid said: "There was no school at Oswiecim."

"Ha," said Goy. "Ha-ha. Kicked him. Ha-ha-ha."

Ate said: "I was number one at—it was called Ebert School, Republik-Strasse, Halle, where I went with that tricycle. Then they called it Adolf Hitler School, and

I was number one. Then I told the Police about my people because they betrayed the Führer's trust listening in to foreign stations, so I was given the diploma and promoted at camp, Acting Temporary Upper Swallow at Baldur von Schirach Summer Camp. I was always first."

Eve said: "My dad wouldn't ride a tricycle for a thousand something. I was brought up to be a lady, fur coats and all. And roast chicken, and silk undies, and cakes every day, and—— My father had a gramophone with a huge trumpet on it, like a huge flower, but not a flower but of metal, gold, but it was made to look like a flower beautiful. Size of six air raid siren trumpets put together, but oh so beautiful. It belonged to him. He had a bike too belonged to him. I was to be a Countess."

Ate said: "Upper Swallow with Honorary Blood Drops. I had all the diplomas. Russians took them at that mental asylum. I still have my exercise book I kept. Exercise book, album, look." She pulled a neat blue exercise book from somewhere out of her dress. "Look," she said. "That's—— No, that's just what I wrote down because I knew it by heart. I had to recite it at Ebert School as a little kid. I got my first diploma for it. Look. 'The First Article of the German Constitution: *Deutschland ist eine Republik.*' That is still from the years of German shame, I first wrote it down for fun, here, with these little swastikas, a wreath; it was my first painting—look, posies and swastikas, 'always one posy and one little swastika, and that's the autograph of Herr Streicher. He once came out to camp and we were allowed to do the Germanic Virgins' Torchlight Dance for him, all naked with torchlights, beautiful, and I was first. That's—oh, that's later, that's when I recited the Führer's speech—I don't remember which. I was quickest at learning a speech of the Führer by heart. I think it was the Synagogue Burning Speech, when we got a day off and were led in forms to

burn the Synagogue, only the first three of each form were allowed to set fire to it. This? That's nothing. That's a recipe for a Victory One-pot stew, for camp. Look. War cake recipe, with flour substitute, egg colouring, delicious. Another war cake. And another—— No, that's a bit of notes slipped in; maybe I had no other paper for notes that day, race science lessons, I think, yes. That's about Jews' feet, how to recognize them. They're flat, while Nordic feet—— Look. I was always first at race science. And that's what my mother wrote in: 'Always Remember Faith and Honesty, your Mum who loves you more than anyone in the world.' But that was before they betrayed the Führer's trust. Later—where is it, no, wait, yes, here, look. That's what they wrote in later, when they were taken away. I didn't know they wrote it in, discovered it months later. I wanted to tear out the page, but the exercise book'd fall to pieces, wouldn't it? I never tore out a single page from any exercise book; one mustn't. What does it say? 'Your parents forgive you and will love you always.' ”

Goy said: "I once kicked a teacher, and once I kicked a horse it jumped on a policeman. That was after the bombs, when we was evacuated in a train."

Ate said: "It is my father's handwriting, but it was much neater otherwise. I don't know what happened to them after they betrayed the Führer's trust."

Eve said: "My father was a very high general, and I was an innocent orphan girl, like in a book; then a wicked beautiful foreigner mixed something in my drink so I was poisoned and in my poison sleep he seduced me with champagne and all and left me alone with my baby child and it died in the snow and so I lost my innocence. It was the only time in my whole life. He was a commercial traveller from Budapest."

Ate said: "Look. That's all there is in my exercise book."

That? That's nothing. Just a fun picture someone did. That was when the misunderstanding was at the mental home when they wanted to inject me with petrol as if I was a real mental, but I wasn't, was I? So I ran away and they put me in a bum, the Russians did, and in that bum before I ran away a gent did this picture as a joke. But it isn't well done really; it's meant to be a picture of a fellow doing it with a girl, you know, but not well done." She looked at the exercise book. "I beat it and hitchhiked to Halle," she said. "But when I got there it turned out Halle was gone." She looked at the exercise book with her blue eyes that were as blue as a bloody heaven on a picture postcard, as blue as all the heavens of the Lord God Almighty. "I'd like to go to school again," she said evenly.

Eve said: "Smith. That wasn't true about my father a general, and my baby dead. I never had no baby, Smith; it was all made up. A hard-luck story like you tell a gent. My father was a postman. Then he was an infantryman. Then he was a lance-corporal. That's all. Then he went East. Then he wrote just once he was fine, and the Russians lousy all with lice on their heads, he wrote, and he was sending a fur hat and he was defending Western what you call it? Civilisation. That was the only time he wrote. That hat never came. That's all. No general, no baby, no nothing. I was just a land army girl, helping at farms, that's all. I never killed anyone but moles. That's all. And that hat never came. A fur hat."

"Yes," said Smith.

"I never killed no one. That's all I can say about myself," Eve said quietly.

Goy said: "I killed many."

"That's all I can say about myself," said Eve.

Goy said: "I killed lots. Dogs. Rats. I killed five soldiers. Enemies."

"What's an enemy?" said Yid.

Goy said: "It's fun killing them. I once wanted to be a butcher's boy."

Yid said: "What's an enemy?"

"Those you don't know the names of," Goy said. "It's fun being a butcher's boy. That was when they evacuated us from the bombs, the other kids and my mother too, not my father, and in the new place my mother was married to a greengrocer. Then there was bombs, so we was evacuated back—no, not back, somewhere; my mother was married to a Luftwaffe sergeant there. Then she was married to an undertaker, but that was in another district and he wouldn't take me because there was bombs and only one bed left, so I was evacuated with the sister-in-law of that undertaker to Frank—was it Frankfurt? There was bombs; she was killed. No, the neighbour of hers I was evacuated with was killed by bombs when we was in a train, so they asked me at the First Aid, 'Where do you come from?' but I didn't know, so they evacuated me as an orphan, and in that village— No, yes, no. Wait, in the next-next village they evacuated me to: that was where I wanted to be a butcher's boy. But there was no meat."

Eve said: "You can take me along if you like, Smith."

The man looked up slowly. "Take you along?" he said. "Where?"

"There isn't any room here," Eve said. "To your digs, if you like. I don't mind where."

Ate said: "She means you can have her." She said it politely and earnestly; she did not laugh.

Goy said: "There was no meat left by that time to be a butcher's boy anywhere."

Four

CURLS came in at that moment. He came in running. He was a fugitive. He came from the yard, pushed open the window, jumped down in, and ran.

That man in authority, the one from the Committee, was after him, it turned out a split second later; the one who had tried to requisition the place an hour or two before. There he was all of a sudden, framed by the window, raincoat and all, political "P" badge and what-not. He stopped up there for a moment, panting. His face was grey with exhaustion from the chase. The next moment he too jumped down. Had there been some fear of plague and spotted fever stopping him earlier in the day? A mightier urge must have intervened; he jumped, unhesitating.

The boy was ten or six fleeting steps ahead of him then, close to the table. He went after the boy at once. The boy, panting too, panicky, dodged him round the table, and he went after him. It was funny how he did it; there was no jump and recoil in his steps, but a shuffling, shoving velocity, like water-fleas shooting criss-cross on a stagnant pool. There was that hunter's urge; it made him shove along quick enough, but he was not given to physical exercise probably; half starved too; and his heart and the kidneys they had kicked him into at the camp. Maybe he had not run more than fifty yards, but he might have run all the way from Marathon to Athens town by the look of him.

He couldn't spare a split breath to utter a single sound, "Stop" or anything, "In the name of Allied Military Government" or what you'd call out in a case like that. He was all silence; and that flicker of desperation in his eyes: I must make a job of this, I must make a job of this.

He looked like a pensioned-off rat-catcher called back from the almshouse for active service, and now he performs under the eyes of the village worthies and shows his mettle.

Yes, there was something rat-catching about the way he shoved round the table after the fleeing boy. He held a pair of handcuffs. Once as he got near enough to try and make them snap round the boy's wrists. Yes, he lurched for it, awkward. He missed the mark; the steel spring snapped to in the empty air with a clicking sound.

It would have been laughable had there not been that despair in the eyes of the two of them. In the two of them, in their catching urge and evading urge, there was such a singleness of purpose that they ignored the others completely, utterly; they just weren't there. I will catch you; you will not catch me.

The others looked on, speechless. It was Smith woke up to it first. He grabbed the raincoat's collar as he shoved past him, and jerked him back. It was not much of a jerk really, but you couldn't trust the fellow to stand up to a full man blowing at him with the force of a full man's lungs. He just turned round his own axe and slumped down on the bench, panting.

"What's all this business?" said the Rev. Smith, standing over him.

The man in the raincoat sat there panting, handcuffs ready, and couldn't get half a breath to make a reply. The "P" badge had half come off his breast and was drooping like a weeping willow. It looked ridiculous.

Smith said: "What the hell is all this business about? Leave this boy alone!" A menace was in his voice, far away, like thunder in the other valley behind the hills.

The next move in the game came from somewhere else. "Got him?" said a voice. The man with the fur-collar coat and the bowler hat was standing up there in the

window frame, looking down. "Got him?" he said. "Get him!" He had a cigar between his fingers. And that boy Curls having stood up to him something marvellous an hour or two ago, and now all of a sudden he couldn't face it, he couldn't face it. "Get him!" said the bowler.

The raincoat had not recovered his breath; he had recovered his gesticulations. Gesticulating, he waved a paper, a rubber stamp was on it, typed lines, a signature.

"You can't do that," said Yid. "You can't requisition this place just like that. All you want is to get at the building materials, but there is nobody can tell me about requisitioning. This boy is the lawful owner in possession, so you can't requisition it."

The bowler ignored him completely. He stood there, cigar in mouth.

The raincoat was still seated. He had not recovered control of his lower limbs; he had recovered his voice. "Requisitioning? Who says requisitioning?" he said, waving his sheet. "The boy is a minor, that's all. He could not dispose of any building materials if he wished. He is an orphan minor; he wants a guardian; that's the law. The gentleman up there has volunteered as a guardian, that's all. He has been accepted. We have an order, that's all," he said, waving it. "The gentleman will look after his interests. The boy ought not to be here at all. All I want is act on this order and take him along." He had talked too much, he was emptied out again; there he sat, weeping willow and guardianship order and handcuffs and all, and sat there panting.

"That's a dirty trick," said Smith slowly. "Doing away with the kid and black-sell the logs outside. That's a dirty, stinking trick on this kid, isn't it." That far thunder from the far-off valley was in his voice again. He said quietly, menacing: "Leave this kid alone."

The man in the bowler hat up in the window looked on silent, cigar in mouth.

The raincoat had regained command of his lower limbs. He sent one glance of faint desperation up to the bowler for succour, and got no response, and jerked himself together, it must be, it must be, and jumped up shrieking, "Obstruction!" he shrieked. "I don't care a damn if you are an officer or—— What are you, anyway? a chaplain. You have no right to obstruct an order from the Inter-Allied Kommandantura which——"

He was still waving it, but changed his mind and just dived for the fugitive, handcuffs clinking. Next moment he crashed down to the floor, heavily. The Reverend H. W. Smith had put his foot in front of him; that was all. There the man lay, crashed. That was all. Lying there on the floor, he shrieked: "I am an official! I am an ex-concentration camp prisoner and I am ill. I must not excite myself and I am——"

He stopped. The man with the bowler had come down, noiseless. He took his cigar out of his mouth and said: "Stop it." He turned to the Reverend. Out of the edge of that mouth of his, without raising his voice, without moving his lips, he said: "Sorry, Chaplain. Forget about this bloke. There is a misunderstanding. This needs a word, man to man."

He looked at the rabble of kids in the room. He had half a mind to send them out, but it wasn't worth it, was it? Two gentlemen of the better class could have a palaver anywhere and know what was what. "A little misunderstanding," he said without moving his lips. "I quite see. You think you were first in on this. You weren't, in fact. You didn't know we have been here before, anyway. There is enough in this for three parties. No good? All right. I'm taking the gentleman on the floor on my own share. All right, you win. So it is a fifty-fifty split, although

I have the paper. It's just I don't want any unpleasantness. That's my philosophy. So you have a clean fifty-fifty split, a gentlemen's agreement between gentlemen, with me you needn't have anything in writing, you can ask any gentleman at the Kommandantura."

He looked at the wet end of his cigar, investigating. As there was no reply, he went on, out of the edge of that mouth of his: "I see. But you're wrong. Your fifty per cent. with me is more than if you make a hundred per cent. alone. Alone, what can you make of it? A few cartloads of firewood. As a Reverend you can't even sell it direct; you have to get someone to do it for you, and pay a commission. Right? Sell in the open market. To the population. What do you get? Marks. Polish marks, Occupation marks, schilling marks, marks. Dirt. Marks. That's what you get if you do it alone, as a Reverend. Well, say you barter it. I see what you mean. Say you can barter it against—— You can't barter it against bulky stuff as a Reverend, so you'll have to barter it against drugs. Cocaine, morphine. That your philosophy? Good. But again you can only get marks for it, or schillings; you can't get dollars. Because as a United States Army Chaplain you can't sell to the United States Army authorities!"

He sucked at his unlit cigar, smacking, and let it be. "You can't," he said. "I can." Out of the edge of his mouth he went on: "I sell them the rubbish as railway sleepers. They aren't railway sleepers? They'll buy them as railway sleepers from me." He looked round. "And we'll get this place for us too. It's all in the fifty-fifty deal."

There was no reply.

"The kids?" said the gent in the bowler out of the edge of his mouth. "I see. Reverend and all that. You needn't worry about the kids. Anyway, they're the scum of the earth. Don't touch them. Place here is much too

good for them. Place here is good enough for a little bar, if you ask me. Brass fittings and all. Cosy. I got the stocks, too. Liquor, I mean. It doesn't really come— Well, okay, it comes into the fifty-fifty deal; it's all thrown in. That's how I do business. Such kids don't feel it, believe me. Kick them out—next day you find them in some other cellar under the rubble hundred yards down the street." He paused. "Unless, as a Reverend, maybe you want them out of your sight as a Reverend. I appreciate that, as one gentleman to the other. They can have a lift in a lorry. Dump them across the Danube in the Russian Zone."

He looked at his unlit cigar, and sucked at it. It sounded like a kiss. He said: "Okay, you don't want to discuss it in front of them, do you? Doesn't suit a gent of your education. Okay with me. Do I know what a priest is? I know. Don't distress the kiddies talking it over in their presence. I am a religious man myself! Okay, you have a meal with me at the Imperial."

"Leave these children alone," said the Reverend H. W. Smith.

"That's it," said the bowler hat without moving his lips. "Exactly. Leave the kids and have a palaver over a meal at the Imperial. With me, you'll get a meal there!" He kissed his cigar. He went on, even quieter. "There is a bottle of fizz I know of—know where it comes from? Left over from the Potsdam Conference of the Big Three! Confidential. Gentleman's word of honour. That's the sort of fizz you get when you have a meal with me." He went on, even quieter. "Reverend. Man to man. I know of a young lady would do anything for a gent who'd let her share in a bottle of fizz like that, Reverend. What do you say? Seventeen. Virgin. What do you say?"

"Leave these children alone," said the Reverend Smith. It was not a reply really, was it? It was senseless, but

there it was. And he was still quiet, and only that thunder behind the hill.

A spark was in the eyes of the man with the bowler for one moment. It disappeared again. A chaplain, he thought behind his eyes; a chaplain, green too; make allowances for his antics. Looking at his cigar end, he said, unruffled: "That young lady would do anything for any gent if I tell her. Any colour—see? Black or no black. Just doesn't matter. Modern outlook. A gent is a gent. That's what we have been fighting for after all, haven't we? That's what this war was about. Democracy!"

He retired, just one little step, as the Reverend H. W. Smith stepped so close to him. You never knew with those Yanks. Crouching too, somehow, this Yank was crouching, yet still overreaching him by a hand at least. Better step back yet another step. You never knew with those niggers. "Leave these children alone and get out," the nigger said that moment. Who did he think he was? Better step back, yet another step or two, anyway, and look round. The girls! It must be the girls!

"Awfully sorry," the man with the bowler said one moment later. "So that's it. Sorry, it just didn't occur to me. But from one gent to another, I know what's what, hereabouts. I do; you don't. From one gent to another, you won't find it worth letting slip a deal. Not for these two ladies here, whichever of the two is you fancy. They're just lousy. And you're lucky if it's just gonorrhoea you get; more likely it'll be——"

He did not finish the sentence. "Hi," he said. "You can't do that." The bowler hat had come down deep on his head. The nigger hand of the damned nigger had come down on the bowler hat. The man turned and ran, four steps. Then he stopped. The cigar had come out of his mouth by the violence of the procedure. It lay under the table. The man raced back there, and collected it like

a flash, and raced back out, and swung himself up to the exit window with elasticity. Up there, safe, he stopped. The raincoat, ignored in the palaver, had preceded him by three jumps. He was running, back out there; he was gone by then, drooping "P" badge and all. But the man in the driven-in bowler stopped in the window just for one moment, for a last glance of survey; even the unlit cigar had found its way back between his lips.

A moment later he too was gone. The Reverend Hoseah Washington Smith from Jesus Church, Beulah, near Claxtonville, Louisiana, in the United States, had bent down, wordless, to a piece of brick that must have lain there on the floor from some prior incident. He hurled it. It crashed against the splintering window frame two inches away from the bowler. The gentleman was no longer visible a moment later.

The man down in the basement was standing there looking after him, wild-eyed, breathing heavily. There was no sound. He turned slowly, and looked at the children, from face to face, as if he were seeing them for the first time. His arm, a long negro arm, was still dangling after the throw. He looked at their silent faces.

"Well," he said, raucous. "Where do we go from here?"

They all got going the moment the bowler was out of sight. Yid raced up and closed the window and bolted it. Curls went out back and came in again, dragging Tiny's cart; Herr Muller was tied to it. Eve went about here and there, there and everywhere; what was she collecting, sticks, bricks? Goy had disappeared in the first moment, he came back dragging pieces of iron, and put them together, up near the window—a bazooka. That was a box with ammunition he was dragging up to it. A razor was there, in Yid's hand. Ate stepped up to the

barred street entrance and tried to look out. All that happened at great speed, and without a word. It was like a night alarm given to an advance patrol; up, up, the enemy. Not three minutes had gone by since the bowler disappeared, and the place was transformed into a fortress. It happened with the scramble of a change of scenery between acts in a theatre, but with the sleep-walker's swiftness, sleep-walker's sureness of people going through motions that have long since become matters of daily use. It was all over, after those three minutes. There they stood, grim, pale, panting.

The man too was still panting. With that piece of brick he had hurled more than a piece of brick. He looked round, slow-eyed, and said, raucous: "What's the use? It's no use."

Yid said: "There is more people tried to get at this place and couldn't. They won't get us. Not us. Not alive."

"They won't come back," said the man. "Stop worrying. I'll smash his—yes, I'll smash his skull for that fellow if he——" He wiped his face with his sleeve; he wiped over his face as if to wipe away many things. "Well," he said, quieter, "I'm not just a clergyman. I'll have that skunk put in jail if he shows his face again. I'm not just a coloured man. I am an American officer! I'll back you up!"

They drew nearer to him, slowly. "Back us up?" Yid said. "What do you mean, back us up? You mean you will back us up?"

"I'll back you up," the man said.

"Back us up," said Yid. "In what way are you going to back us up?"

Eve said: "Can't you understand? He'll back us up!"

"Anyone can say 'back us up,'" Yid said. "In what way? Hi, mister. In what way?"

The man said: "In any way."

"There," said Eve. "In any way."

Yid turned to the others. "Heard that?"

Goy said: "He can back us up on the swill. American swill-bin swill, behind the mess. He can back me up letting me in on that swill five minutes before the others. Marvellous."

"Swill," said Yid. "The great thing would be to sell it to them before they make swill of it. Can you back us up letting me in on selling? Selling anything. I can make up bargains of anything."

Eve said: "Can't you see he'll let us all in, on all things? Cinema tickets, and—and ride in a jeep, and—oh, many things. American sandwiches. Anything." She breathed quietly, and said quietly: "Anything. For ever. For all the time he is posted here."

The man looked at her. "Why here? Where do we go from here? I'll take you out of this." He looked round, slow-eyed, over the battered place. "I'll take you out of this—anywhere."

Yid nodded. They were all standing round him with their eyes on him. Yid nodded, and said drily: "I know. Lorry lift over the Danube, dump us in the Russian Zone, and you've got this place for a speakeasy. With brass fittings."

"Aw, shut up," Eve said. "Aw, Yid, shut up. Aw, shut up."

The man shook his head. "I'll help you and stand by you," he said evenly.

Yid said: "There isn't much you can stand by us with, anyway. Army chaplain. It isn't much of a muchness."

The man said: "I'll stand by you with all I have."

Yid said: "How much is all you have?"

The man said: "Not much. Well, I thought it was much, but it isn't. You see, I had to work my way up from—no,

not just from scratch, from very much deeper down than scratch I had to work my way up to where I stand. You'd think—in a democracy; but it isn't so easy for a coloured kid even in a democracy. Well. Where I stand—pretty high up, I thought not so long ago. You said: not much of a muchness. You're right! I saved since I was twenty-five. Just about twenty-five years ago? Yes, just about it. I thought I saved a lot. But then—Jesus Church, Beulah, isn't much of a living! And—there was some illness, too. And once I bought a—a ring, yes, with a little diamond. Not much of a diamond. It was much to me! Well. It just occurred to me because it was yet another net loss to—to the savings account. There isn't much!"

"How much?" Yid said.

"Two thousand dollars, just about. No, it's two thousand one hundred and thirty-six dollars and sixty cents exactly. I mustn't pretend I don't know the figure. I know it very well. I always liked my accounts exact. Ten cents to a beggar, thirty cents for a postage stamp. It isn't a lot, is it, for twenty-five years' saving? But then again, some people haven't set out on their path to get rich. Though I have a suspicion just now that maybe they lost sight for some time of what they set out for. Short-sighted, I have a suspicion. Gold-rimmed pince-nez and all, and—short-sighted all the same. Or just because of that pince-nez? Who knows?"

"Two thousand one hundred and thirty-six American dollars?" Yid asked.

Eve said: "And sixty cents."

The man nodded. "I can draw them anywhere. I can cash a cheque with the paymaster any day." He smiled. "And those thirty dollars foreign service allowance I can claim. Can I really claim them?"

Yid did not smile. "It's a great sum of money," he said. He was very pale.

The man spread his arms. "That's what I have. That's what I'm going to use to get you out of hell."

They were all so silent, if a bug had let itself drop from the ceiling to the floor you'd have heard it like a revolver shot, so silent were they. They were all pale with listening, that's the way they listened.

Yid said quietly: "If this was a joke, it would be terrible."

Ate said: "All of us? Not just—some? You mean you'll help all of us, with all that fortune?"

The man nodded. They all looked at him as he nodded slowly.

Yid said, groping for his words: "One could try something—quite different. Something quite new. One could sell sugar, and it turns out it is really sugar, not just chalk from a building site. I can't explain what I mean. Sell a bottle of schnapps, and the fellow opens it and it's really a bottle of schnapps. Or cocaine; you peddle cocaine, and the bloke sniffs it up, and you can stand by and needn't run away because it is just a bit of white flour, but he sniffs it is really cocaine, so why should you run? Understand? You don't. Can't explain it. I have been thinking it out lately, with my books, in my study. Getting away from here—anywhere. You say Amazonas is just a river. All right, you win. Let it be somewhere else, anywhere—and getting away and having everything simple. A bed—a bed. Milk—milk. Selling cocaine—cocaine. A military police stopping you—here, sir, *Kamerad*, this is my paper, everything okay, living permit, food permit, travel permit, delousing certificate, everything." He checked himself, and said in an altered voice, quieter still. "Mister! You can still say so if you want to change your mind, or say it was all a joke, and back out of this." His voice was unsteady, and he was smart boy, and now it was funny to listen to his unsteady voice.

The man said: "I shan't back out of this."

Curls said: "Sir, has Cologne been bombed? Because when they took my Mummy she said if she can't come back here she will try and get to Cologne in the British Zone, and I too must try all the way to the British Zone, and we shall look, she for me and I for her, outside the big church of Cologne, every day at noon, till one o'clock, until she finds me if we can get there if we are both alive. We could go to Cologne! Has Cologne been bombed?"

The man looked at him. "Not much," he said quietly. "Not very much."

"Fine," said Curls. "And we could take the building materials. We can build a house from it for us' all. I'd know how to build a house."

Ate said: "Build a house? You can't build a house, silly."

"I can," said Curls. "Or repair. If it isn't too badly bombed where we go I can repair any house. Goy can help." He frowned. "Maybe we want lorries?"

Eve said: "Maybe there is a house already where he wants to take us."

The man looked at her.

Eve said: "Maybe one with——"

Ate interrupted her: "Maybe one with an apple tree!" She laughed, silvery.

The man said: "Maybe there wouldn't be much wrong with that house." He stood there thinking. "It—won't—work," he said, heavily. "They won't—let me. One will have to—consider." He turned to Curls, smiling. "Still! You will build! You can become a builder!" He turned to Eve, and asked: "And you? What is to become of you?"

Eve said: "I want to become a virgin."

Ate said: "I get out of this. It makes me sick. I can't

look at you all, it makes me so sick. 'Has he got a rose tree?' 'I want to become a virgin!' Let me go. I am sick of all of you. How grand you are, all of you, aren't you. A pull-water lavatory like a—like a church. Let me go! I don't belong here, do I? Just dropped in for a cup of tea. Dried turnip-peel tea, like Mrs. Stalin giving a party to Mrs. Führer or something. Dried gassed gipsy boots for fire-making, like a bloody plutocrat. 'And have you got a rose tree?' Get out of my way!" She jerked back the window bar, pale, blue-eyed, her blue eyes swimming in pools of shadow. "A pull-water lavatory!" she exclaimed, desperation in those blue eyes of hers.

The Reverend Smith had gone up to her. Now he laid his arm round her shoulder and said quietly: "Come back to us. Come." She let herself be led by him without resistance. There she stood, awkward, and leaned her face against the breast of his uniform. She looked just a kid. "Now," he said, quietly, and had his arm round her shoulder, holding her.

"All hate me," she said, sobbing.

"We love you," he said very quietly.

"Oh," she said, between many sobs. "Oh," and hid her face, wet with many tears, on his breast. "Oh, you all hate me so," and was just a starved kid with very fair pigtails, and ill too probably. "Oh, I wish I hadn't run away from the mental home that night so they'd given me that injection and all was over."

"Now," he said, "now," and held her firmly.

Tearless suddenly, without lifting her face, she whispered: "They always hated me because I was first."

"Yes," he said.

She said, drily: "My Mummy didn't hate me."

He said: "Maybe you will find her?" He righted himself, and said louder: "Maybe we shall find—each of us—all of us—many a thing we thought we had lost long

ago?" He stood erect. "Kids," he said, with many rivers flowing in his voice, "kids," he said, with a wide gesture that was a street corner revivalist's, a poor young nigger preacher's, a man's long buried, and yet of great majesty, "kids! To-morrow! To-morrow the world!"

THIRD PART

One

"HEYAH," said Tiny. "Hohse hamm." She had her own language for intercourse with horses. She was seated in her hand-cart, or rather on it: a piece of wood was laid across its side walls as a seat, and she sat on it. A piece of wood, or rather a wooden tray; a U.S.A. Army canteen tea tray, brand new too; it had no business to be in that basement. She sat on it bolt upright, and with quite an end of uprightness and elasticity to spare. She was so elastic, springs were in her, coiled metal springs; if her skin were to burst anywhere they would show, shining with patented double elasticity like a divan bed straight from the furnishers. Her skin was not burst, though; her skin was washed, with soap, U.S. Army soap, officers' regulation issue; there was a piece of it about somewhere—no, five pieces, scented like bloody spring-time in a New York department store; they had no business to be in that basement. That girl's face hadn't been washed for eight months at least; ever since the day they discovered six corpses in the camp's water tank and hanged those they thought might get typhus. There wasn't such a clean face as that girl's in the whole of Austria; the Führer of the United States hadn't such a face. There wasn't a spot on it, not a sting of a flea, not a bug's bite. What had looked like an eczema had vanished too; that was the sort of a soap that soap was.

"Heyahuh," she yelled, with eyes polished like a pair of bloody brass buttons on parade, and holding a bridle with little tinkling bells on it, a toy bridle for kids to play

with, as new as new, stinking of having been liberated from a toy-shop if there was still a toy-shop, or of having been bought in the black market for—how much? Too much anyway for a bloke having no more to spend than two thousand one hundred and thirty-six on getting six kids away. “Huyuhuh,” she yelled, this being her lingo with the horses.

She had two of them. One was Herr Müller. He was brushed and combed like a marriage proposal on a Sunday. He had a blue ribbon on his left ear. He was the horse that did the barking, not the pulling. The pull horse was Goy, on all fours too. It made his knees go dirty; he had bare knees, as he wore those American officer’s shorts, brand new, with a fine brand new pullover that looked easily like five hundred fags. He was brushed and washed and what-not, his fair hair was pomaded down something beautiful, he looked like a football champion all ready for the photographers.

“Hihihihi,” he said; it was his lingo for being a bloody horse. He raced with that cart round the table like a U.S. Army hearse under the influence. “Paplim, paplam, paplum,” he said. It meant nothing. The barking horse called Herr Müller sat down on his hind legs and started waving his front paws frantic in a prayer, and he having missed by the closest shave being soup by now and eaten and done with, and now there he sat with a bow to his ear doing tricks. Nobody taught him, so how did he know the tricks?

“Yohohohoooh,” said Tiny, “ta blink zuzizu kakalapakala.” It sounded like some bloody D.P.’s in a bloody transit camp, but it meant nothing in the whole world. Fire was in the fireplace, three pairs of fat gipsy boots burning all at a time; it was warm like a bloody summer day.

“Tale,” said Tiny. “Tale.”

Goy said: "Yid be back any minute. He tell tale."

"Tale!" said Tiny. "Tale!!!" Let her open that mouth of hers by another split inch: a coil spring will shoot out of her. "Tale!!!!!" she yelled.

Goy sat down on his arse on the floor next to her. "Goy no tale; Yid tale," he said. It was his horse way of saying things, or maybe his little-boy way as a kid a few years ago, and he just forgot it was. He looked up to where a lady's wristlet watch was propped up for a clock on the mantelshef, and said: "Smithy Reverend tell tale half-hour come fetch all away away toot in a jeep he'll fetch us all in half an hour then you can ask him tell you a bloody tale."

"Iiii," yelled Tiny. "Tale!!!" She got a stick and hit him on the head something marvellous; she was so much better. They both cried with laughter, it was so marvellous. All three of them cried with laughter, Herr Müller too.

"All right," Goy said, too weak with laughter to shield his head against that stick of hers. "All right, a tale! Once a Smithy Rev. a nigger came to a joint and he gave the kids sandwichies, and then——"

"Which?" said Tiny. "Which sanchies?"

"Ham sanwichies," Goy said, "and cheese wiches, and bully beef santswitch and——"

"And shite," said Tiny. "Tswitchi ihihi ha."

"And laxitive chocolate shite sandwiches," Goy said, "and tongue sanwies, and dog roast dog wentwitches, and——"

"Iiii," said Tiny.

"No," Goy agreed. "No rostog twitchi." They all agreed; Herr Müller too agreed. Goy said: "And this Smithy Rev. wento fetchi for the kids boots, from the American Army boots, each kid a boots brand new from the Army store, and brought the kids raincoats each a

brand new raincoats from Army store, and pullovers, and pull-unders, and pull-middles, and pull-everywhere all brand new, and a parachute for Eve to make a silk dress from an American Army 'chute brand new, and for Tiny a pixy cap——"

"Kixi," said Tiny. Herr Müller too was of the opinion.

"A Kixi pap," Goy concurred, "and coal the Rev. brought he took along in his own jeep from the railway just took it, and——"

"And sanchiches," Tiny said.

Goy said: "And sanchiches. And that's the story."

Tiny said: "And."

Goy said: "There's no and. That's your bloody story for you, the whole of it."

"And," said Tiny. "Willi hooh."

"What will he do?" said Goy. "All right, you win. What will he do? He will come in a half-hour—no, let's see, in twenty-six, with his jeepjeep, and will say get in all of you, and I'll sit in front, and——"

"Iiii," said Tiny.

"—and we'll bothy sit in front with him you and I," Goy consented, "and Herr Müller sit on the bonnet maybe, and he'll drive and drive, and not just a lift but real drive us all, and drive us all the way long into Zwitcherland."

"Sanchi," said Tiny.

"Sanwicherland," Goy agreed. "Where there is sanchiches all over the place. That's where he is going to drive us to. And that's what's going to become of us."

"Utch," Tiny said.

"No," said Goy. "Changed my mind. No butcher for me. I'll go to school. Prize win boxer school and win prizes. And fire brigade school, I'll be the Führer of the Zwitcherland fire brigade some day, because I likes fires. And you'll go to school the Rev. says, a Sandwitzerland school where they teach a kid become twice as fat. And

Curls a school and Yid a school and Eve a, and Herr Müller a dog soup school."

"Iiii," Ty said, "iiii," stamping her feet on a bottom of that handcart like a stick o' bombs, and with that bottom broke stamping right through on the floor. And "iiii" something marvellous, so much laughter, she falls on him, and he falls on her, and she on him with the broke hand-cart on top. And is this my foot or is this your hand? And tear him by the pomade hair all ruffled, and Herr Müller sit by on hind legs waving his forepaws something frantic. Where has he got that trick from? And so much bloody laughter, something absolutely A1 first-rate and marvellous.

"Hi," said Curls, coming in from the yard. "Hi. Twenty-two minutes."

"It's fast," Goy said. "Twenty-three."

Curls said: "We can't take rafters. It's too much for a jeep. So I have seventeen brass door knobs, out of the rubble. He said I can take all I can store in the tool-box of the jeep. Seventeen knobs. But now I got eight small radiators of the central heating system out of the rubble. I dismantled them all day. Will he let me take them? It's small radiators really. And eleven large radiators, just a bit larger. Will he let me take nineteen central-heating radiators in that jeep? It's a hell of a bother." His was a very clear lingo, with the best elocution of one of the best schools in Vienna town. He looked it, too. Best school. Trim like anything. Washed like the Holy Virgin. And trim. He looked as if he was looking like his mother, who must be a very beautiful woman by the looks of him. "It's a hell of a bloody bother of a mucking botheration," he said with that neat, clear voice, and smiled with a nice smile, his mother's probably; it was a pity the Poles liberated her.

Goy looked up to him from the floor, where he was still sitting, but Tiny had rolled off him and had a conversation with Herr Müller, separate, just the two of them.

Goy said: "In Twitcherland that school I'm going to go to isn't just a boxing school, though there will be boxing too, the Rev. says. It's a school for becoming a fire brigade. Or a policeman. The Rev. says I'm daft, so I'd better be a policeman."

Curls said: "I'll learn lots of things. It isn't just building. I have been thinking about it. The Rev. says it isn't just building, it's building—what for? I'm going to build just what is bombed. Not just this house or that house. I'm going to be a bombed-houses-upbuilder of the whole world." He smiled, a child's smile.

Goy said: "The Rev. says I likes fires, so I must be a fire brigade. That's the way, he says. I am such a thief he says I must become a policeman. I took all the turnips and brought them back to that greengrocer we turned the barrow over the other day. Here is your turnips, I said. I'm daft, so here is your bloody turnips. The Rev. says it was a Good Deed. It's fun, doing Good Deeds." He smiled.

Curls smiled, and asked: "What did he say? The greengrocer, I mean."

Goy smiled. "Hit me," he said, smiling.

Curls said: "Think the Rev. will let me take the radiators?"

Goy said: "Maybe they don't want any radiators where he takes us? Maybe we get there, and you with the radiators, and then it turns out there is a bloody summer all the year round."

"Think so?" Curls said, quietly. They were both smiling. Tiny was talking with Herr Müller.

Eve came in from the street, and looked at the mantel-shelf. "Fourteen minutes," she said.

"Fifteen," said Curls. "It's fast."

Eve said: "But he'll want one minute to stop the jeep outside and come down fetch us. So he'll come one minute early, probably."

"Yes," said Curls.

Eve walked up and down. There was something in her wouldn't let her stop. She wore a frock, with flowers, new like anything, it made her more grown-up than with her slacks. And her hair, too, stuck up as if a hairdresser had been having his hands at it. It made her look more grown-up and more young, all in one. Maybe because there was no paint on her face, not a spit of it. It was pale, but then again it looked red at the same time. Odd, you wouldn't expect a girl her shape to have something wrong with her lungs. Maybe it was just the expectation. She walked up and down. Her eyes were dream eyes, but not a flapper's. They were dream-serious like a church. So she walked up and down. "Ate come home?" she asked.

"No," Goy said.

Eve said: "I could wash the floor. Another nine minutes. It'd look nicer we leave it with a washed floor." She walked up and down.

"She's gone since morning," Curls said.

"Who?" said Eve.

"Ate," Goy said.

"The floor has never been washed," Eve said. You could see she didn't listen to what she said herself. "Are all your socks mended?" she said.

"Yes," said Goy.

Curls said: "You mended them, didn't you? You sat up half the night mending them."

"Yes," said Goy.

Eve said: "Six minutes." She stopped. She sat down near the window. She sat motionless.

Tiny stopped and Herr Müller stopped. They all looked at her.

"Yid isn't back," Eve said. "Ate isn't back."

Curls said: "If he is to be one minute early he ought to be here now."

Eve said: "He can come the other way. He can drive into the back-yard the other way."

They listened.

"Coming," Goy said.

Curls said: "Yes. No. Yid."

Yid said: "Blessed be the Lord." He turned to them all, offended. "There is nothing to laugh at, is there?" He came down and took off his hat. It was a bowler hat. His hair underneath was painstakingly parted. He put on the hat again, fidgety. His face underneath looked very small.

"Just in time," said Curls.

"No hurry," Yid said, putting two fingers of his gloves—gloves he wore—between neck and collar to loosen it. "No hurry. There is a parade in Schwarzenberg Square, nobody can get through there, so he'll go all the way round the Ring. It'll take him another ten minutes at least." He brushed some dust off his sleeve; imaginary dust; he was fidgety. "How do you like the coat?" he said gruffly.

Eve turned to him quickly: "You know he'll be here in ten minutes?"

"Parade?" Curls asked.

"Yes," said Yid. "Unveiling of the monument of the Allied Soldier-Liberator. With sixteen columns. Russians built it."

Eve asked: "How can you know he will be here in ten minutes?"

"Maybe in eight minutes," Yid said gruffly. "How do you like the coat?"

"Russians built it?" Curls asked.

"Russians built it; Allies present it to the town," Yid said. "That's what the parade is for. With all Allied generals. Smith will be seven minutes late at least." He brushed some dust off his sleeve. He wore an overcoat; it was so large you could hardly see his brand new shoes looking out from under it. It was a townish coat, black, the sleeves too long.

"Seven minutes late," Eve said. "How do you know?"

"How do I know?" he said gruffly. "I have seen him. He will be here presently. The Lord permitting. How do you like the coat?"

"Fine," Eve said, quietly. "You seen him?"

Curls asked: "All Allied generals?"

"Yes," said Yid. "A presentation to the town. Cost eight hundred and fifty-six thousand schillings. The town has to pay it." The coat had stuffed shoulders, and a tight waist and a pocket for a fancy handkerchief. He wore five pencils in it, with clips.

Eve said: "You seen him, so why didn't he come with you?"

Yid said: "Pack. Get the jeep ready, a large type jeep. Get petrol. Get our papers signed."

"Our papers weren't signed yet?" said Eve.

"Our papers weren't signed yet?" Yid aped her. "He must go round to the Kommandantura, fetch the signatures, that's all. The sleeves are a bit long. I'll have them shortened in Switzerland."

Eve turned to the others, gaily. "Get out, all of you. Get your things ready; he'll be here in a minute!"

"Yes," said Curls. "But the radiators."

"You take what you can," said Yid. "You leave what you like. It's all the same."

Goy said: "Food card stamp day to-day."

"Food cards," Yid said. "Who knows we want food cards in Switzerland? In Switzerland is like Paradise. They have 466,438 cows, 2,116,684 chickens. I read it up in a book; 2,086 locomotives. Berne, Geneva, Zurich, Basle, 3,616 churches, 12 major lakes. Food cards! Who wants food cards in Paradise?"

"Leave the food cards?" Eve said very quietly.

Curls said: "Twelve major lakes?"

"And so many small lakes," Yid said gruffly, "that our Lord permitting you can wash your feet in a different lake every single day."

"Why must he wash his feet?" Goy asked.

Tiny said: "Sanchi."

Yid said: "I'll have the shoulders taken in just a bit."

Eve said: "Get out, kids, get out. Get out there."

Yid said: "Get out, get ready, throw away what you like, food cards, anything. God pleasing he'll be here in two-three minutes."

"Sanchi," said Tiny. "Iiii."

"Tiny says," said Goy, "how many sandwichies in Switzerland." He went out with her, they all went out back; only Yid stayed. Eve closed the door behind the others and came back to him.

"Now," she said quietly.

"What 'ye mean: Now?" he said gruffly. "There is no Now. He'll be here in a minute."

"He won't," she said.

He said: "He will. I have talked to him. Less than half-hour ago. So what do you want?"

"You met him in the street?"

"No. Went to see him."

"Went to see him? At his quarters?"

"Where else do you want me to go to see him—America?"

"What did you go to see him for, considering he was coming anyway?"

"What did I go to see him for?" he said gruffly. "Are you a judge? Are you a military police? I went to see him because I wanted an overcoat, so I wanted a buying permit, so I went to ask him to get a buying permit for me, so he gave me a buying permit. That's all. So what do you want?"

"I don't know," she said quietly.

"But in the end," he said, "I didn't even need the permit. Got this coat just like that. Swopped it."

She looked at him attentively. "What did you swop it for?"

"What did I swop it for? What do you want me to swop it for? Crown jewels? I swopped it against my food cards."

"You gave away your food cards?" she said, paling. And thought, and said: "Why didn't you take a permit coat from the permit store?"

"I wanted this coat," he said. "Just this coat." He stroked it. "It is a man's coat," he said gruffly. "How do you like the tie?"

"Fine," she said. Maybe she wasn't used to much thinking, generally. "Fine," she repeated. You could see her forehead work, she must think so much. She said suddenly: "You haven't used the permit he got for you. Show me the permit."

"Show you the permit?" he said. "What's new in a permit?" He shrugged his shoulders, and fetched it out of the inner pocket of that overcoat of his, slowly.

She took it, and looked at it. "I am not good at such things," she said, helpless.

"A permit," he said ill-humoured. "What is there to be good at?" He held out his hand to have it back.

She did not let go, she stared at it. "Is this his own signature?" she asked very quietly.

He nodded.

She asked: "Can he sign a permit for overcoats?" She wasn't used to so much thinking; it hurt her somehow, by the looks of her; it wasn't doing her any good! "Can he sign permits?" she asked quietly.

He said gruffly: "A *Galach* can do anything."

She looked at him. "Yes," she said. "Yes."

He took the wristlet watch from the mantelshelf, and looked at it, and put it in his pocket, fidgety.

She had turned to the window. "I know," she said, turned away.

"What?"

"Ten minutes gone," she said. "He won't come." She stood looking out of the window, motionless.

"He will," he said. "He promised. A sin against the Lord. Do you want a *Galach* to commit a sin against the Lord, or what? Nobody can tell me about *Galachs*, and nobody can tell me about the Lord." He paused and said lightly: "I'll be baptized, by the way. The moment we get to Switzerland. Nobody can tell me about the Lord Jesus Christ."

She looked out of the window and said nothing.

"Eve," he said quietly. "Look at me."

She stood there motionless.

"Look at me," he said gruffly. "Am I a man?"

"A man?" She did not turn.

"A man, yes," he said, quiet, urgent. "Look. I have done a hell of a lot of thinking these last two days. All the time, walking about, in my study, all the time I have figured it out. I have been making a grand life for myself. Luxuries. A pull-water lavatory. Fags. Anything. So clever I'd get schnapps for nothing. Show me another fellow can do that. Swill—I got the finest pieces out of

any American swill bin in the whole of Vienna town. But there is a moment when such a position and all that luxury—it doesn't make you happy! See what I mean? Being admired for the lavatory and all that—but what do you get out of this sort of grand life? So I thought out for myself, I'm going to do something entirely new. You know I'm so clever I can think out fancy things? So I thought out I'm going to sell a microscope with a real lens in it and—remember? Flour—it is to be flour; cocaine and it is really cocaine, you needn't run away. An invention! Telling the Truth with Business Articles, I wanted to call the invention. That was—when? Day before yesterday. And since then I have found out it is still not enough. I have been studying it out in my study: why business articles? Why must mankind do business? It is queer what things come into your head once you are as clever as I am; great thoughts, so great you can't think them completely but just like hire-purchase if you know what I mean; in instalments. So why do business at all? Does Herr Müller do business? Does a tree do business? You see, that's why I am going to get myself baptized, too. It is—— You won't understand. It is a first instalment to becoming a tree, somehow. That's the snag with us; with us Jews, I mean, with us Yidden. Let the Lord God Almighty show us a little finger, send a *Galach* or something: at once we'd want the whole hand. Become a tree. Well, I have figured it out to myself: be a tree! But you aren't listening."

"I am," she said, looking out, not turning.

"Well, that's why I turned myself into a man first of all. How do you like the tie, by the way? I hope they'll take me for a man the moment I am in Switzerland. That's why it was essential for me to look first-rate. I'll go to the first estate agent in the first place we get to in Switzerland, and hire-purchase a farm. Needn't be a big

farm; a little farm. 'Got a farm?' I'll say, just like that, nonchalant; and they'll look me up and down, as I stand there, so elegant, and they say: 'Have you got a guarantee, Herr Yiddelbaum?' So I'll say: 'A Reverend is my guarantee.' " He paused. "That's my plan, Eve," he said quietly. And paused, and said quietly: "Eve, will you marry me?"

She did not turn.

"I know," he said quietly. "It's not easy for a girl to get used to the idea—falling in with a man."

She did not turn. She looked out of the window. "I'm a one man's woman, really," she said.

He said: "*He* can't marry you, Eve."

She said: "You have got to be faithful all the same."

He stood there silent.

"It's very, very, terribly kind of you, of course," she said, not turning. "But——" She checked herself. "But I really shan't——" No, she could not check herself any longer, she burst out laughing.

He nodded. "Laughing at me," he said quietly.

"Sorry," she said, choking with laughter, and turned to him. "Sorry!" Her eyes were quite desperate; she was nearly choked with laughing and couldn't stop.

He nodded. He just went on nodding.

"No," she said, fright and laughter-tears in her eyes. "No! But it's so funny! You and I—you and I! Standing here talking like bloody stars in a cinema!"

He looked at her, wordless.

She quietened, and stood by the window looking out again. A sheet of silence hung between them. At last she said: "And then—a farm. What do you know of a farm?"

"You do," he said. "I have been thinking of this all last night. You show me. Haven't you been a land girl? You show me. I'll do all the—the heavy work, you know, hewing and—how do you call that you do with the oxen?"

"Ploughing," she said.

He said: "Ploughing, yes, and—and getting the milk out of some of those cows and——"

"Wearing your bowler hat?" she asked quietly.

He asked: "What's wrong with a bowler hat?"

She said quietly: "Nothing is wrong with a bowler hat." She was still looking out of the window.

He said: "And when I come home tired in the evening from the pastures, we'll sit in front of the house under the tree, Eve. For there must be a tree!"

She asked: "How old are you, Yid?"

He said: "Thirteen times thirteen times thirteen. A whole inflation isn't enough to tell my age."

"Yes," she said. "Yes."

He said: "I want to tell you something. When I bought this coat, off Highmarket, Latzenhof Lane, you know, there was a man standing next to the man I bought it from, with a pocket book looking out of his hip pocket. Believe it or not. Just like that. Now, you know what a pocket book is to me? I needn't touch it. It gets little wings the moment I come within ten yards' distance. You can hold it with both hands or button it up in the inner lining of your inner coat; you can put it on a chain like a political prisoner if you like: it will fly to me on its little wings like a little bird. And now that chap with his pocket book in the hip pocket, sticking out."

"You didn't take it?" she asked.

He said: "Am I a saint? I am not a saint yet. In Switzerland—yes. But what's wrong with picking just one more pocket? I wanted to buy this coat from it! So I tried. My heart was beating, my word. Ever seen my heart beat? I tried, and the fellow turned round at once and started hollering. Couldn't pick that pocket! A miracle!"

He looked at her intently. She did not turn. He went on: "Do you want another miracle? My—my little illness

has gone. I always knew it wasn't diarrhoea; it was dysentery. Gone! That little sore you had is gone? I'm sure it is. How shouldn't it, considering you are a virgin. Look at Tiny, she ought to be dead by now, a balloon belly like hers. It's all part of one great miracle. It was not to—— How can I explain? It was not to offend the Miracle: that's why I didn't use the permit with Smith's own signature, but rather bartered my food ration cards for this coat. For a miracle is—there are special flowers, but I couldn't catch the name, in a film, I couldn't catch it because there was such a racket because there was just a raid on outside. American high-level pin-point raid on the railway station; the station was the only building left in the whole town next morning. So there was just such a racket I couldn't hear the name of that special flower you give to a tart when you seduce her at dinner; so it was in the film. If you touch such a flower it closes at once. And a miracle is like such a flower. You mustn't touch it with your finger tip, it is so touchy. It is more touchy than a burglar alarm in a furriers' shop. That's why I didn't use the permit. Not touch the Miracle! It is like a prisoner in a concentration camp after six months' diet, after he has got all the calories. You mustn't give him a chance to lie down and die. You must support him and help him walk. You must not use a permit for an overcoat, but instead give away your food ration card! For, you see, such a miracle is an argument with God. Nobody can tell me about God. With God it is a matter of hard haggling. Oi, you have to say to the Lord God Almighty, oi, *Gewalt*, I have invested my ration card in this transaction, my fingers have become so stupid I can't pick a pocket, I have blown the bridge behind me, so I appeal to Your sense of honour, Lord: be a gentleman, keep up the Miracle; You can't let me down!"

He looked at her, who was still turned to the window,

and took off his stiff bowler hat, and wiped his brow, and put on his hat again. His face looked very small underneath. He said gruffly: "That's how I figured it out, in my study, all for myself. What do you say to my tie, by the way? Stalin hasn't got such a tie, yellow spots with green." His face looked very small. He asked—no, he did not ask, he stated, drily: "So you won't marry me."

She said: "Look, Yid——"

"Never mind," he said. "Oh, never mind. The danger of a miracle is it makes you drunk. Like schnapps. I have figured it out now. It is marvellous how quick you figure out things, once you—— Maybe you must sacrifice even your drunkenness? Only if you sacrifice even your——your wanting to be a tree, your wanting to get something out of it——?" He looked at her. "What's up? What's wrong with you, say? You're—are you ill?"

She had grown very pale. She said, almost inaudible: "He is coming."

Two

YES, he was coming. You could hear the racket three miles away: the jeep first, and not parking in the street, but turning into the yard, roaring at full throttle as it climbed over the rubble, and stopping, and the kids scrambling out into the open and getting hold of the vehicle, and getting hold of the man, and bringing him in in triumph.

"Hullo!" he said, laughing loud as they crowded round him. "Hoho, hullo!" He wore a felt-lined leather helmet, with flaps hanging down loosely over his ears, and a felt-lined leather coat carelessly half unbuttoned, and high heavy boots. "Do I look like a *Galach*?" he said. "Or do

I look like a bloody polar explorer? What do you say?" His eyes were flashing, his whole face was flashing, black and boisterous. With the kids clinging to him from all sides he looked like a large bear set to and overrun by a pack of clamouring little dogs too small to get their teeth into his heavy fur. He shook them off, laughing. "What do you say, Yid?" he said. "Stalin, when he liberates the North Pole, hasn't got such a coat. That's the sort of a coat this coat is, and a *Mezzie* too. I didn't give a fag for it; I got it out of the storekeeper on the point of my gun!" Tiny got herself half crushed between his legs, Herr Müller jumped at him from behind; he dived for them both at the same time with huge felt-gloved paws and lifted them up to the table top, never mind their wriggling and hollering. "Hi, chum," he said to Tiny with a kid's voice. "Hi, Joe, can you spare me a piece of chewing gum?"

"Iii," said Tiny, "iiii!!"

"Let's have a look at your belly," he said, quieter, and lifted her little frock.

"She is ever so much better," Curls said.

"Sure she is," said the Reverend Hoseah Washington Smith, and let go of her, laughing, with a slap to her buttocks, and retrieved his gloves Herr Müller was trying to drag away. He looked round. "Where is Ate?" he said. And sat down broadly and slapped his thigh and looked round at them all with flashing and merry eyes and said with a voice resounding like all the rivers of Africa: "Up, up, kids, up. What are you waiting for? Hi, Eve, Yid. We've got a long drive in front of us. Eve, you'll be cold. Where is that bag, Goy, I told you to— Ah, here. Curls, that's a balaclava helmet for you. How do you like it, you little monkey? Here, Eve, hoho, what's that, yes, that's your parachute for you at last. I couldn't get it until this morning. On the point of my gun! Robbed it,

highway robbery! Yid! Swell! Ho, you look swell, you do. This tie of yours is the swellest tie I've seen in my bloody life." He looked round. "Where is Ate?" He turned to Eve and said: "You open that parachute and wrap it round you when we sit in the jeep. The King of England isn't as warm as you will be with this parachute wrapped round you. What about your sore—is it gone, Eve? I've got a pair of warm knickers for you somewhere. I'll find them later." He burst out laughing. "You ought to have seen the face of the women services' stores-keeper when I liberated those knickers off her shelf, and she caught me red-handed. 'Mister Reverend!! Ooh!'" He pulled out of his pocket a piece of something and bit off half of it and stuck the other half into Goy's face and pushed it into his gaping mouth. "Get your things out into the jeep double quick, and I say, hi, Curls, there is a tool-box beside the driving seat; there is a gauge in that tool-box. Know an air-pressure gauge? You check the pressure in the tyres. We'll have a long drive," he said, munching. "What are you waiting for? Yid! *Gewalt*, what a tie that tie of yours is. Still going to be a farmer?"

"No," said Yid.

"No? Why?" The man stopped laughing. "Changed your mind?"

"Yes," said Yid. "We'll really leave now? You'll really take us?"

Eve said: "You'll really go with us to Switzerland?"

The man laughed again. "How else do you want me to go with you if not really?" He stopped laughing, and asked, quietly: "So you changed your mind about being a farmer?"

Eve asked: "Why didn't you leave the jeep out in the street, but hid it in the yard?"

The man laughed again. "Hid it—you got the idea! Or do you want all the kids in the district to beg a ride

from us?" He turned to Yid, and asked, quietly: "What do you want to be, then?"

"A monk," said Yid.

"Monk?" The man laughed for one second, and stopped again. "Why a monk?" he asked very quietly.

"I have figured it out," Yid said. "Being a monk," he said, groping, "is still——" He went on, almost voiceless: "Being a monk is the farthest-away thing I can figure out." His face looked very small under that bowler hat.

The man sat there silent for a moment. And looked at him. And looked at the girl. And looked at him. "Well, then," he said gaily, rising.

Eve said: "You got our permits?"

"Sure," he said.

"From the Kommandantura?"

"Sure," he said.

Eve said: "I've never seen a permit from the Kommandantura."

"Shite," said Tiny.

"Hi," said Goy. "Smith, hi. Got a present for you." He was still swallowing.

The man said: "Has Curls tested the tyres? Get a move on; we haven't got any time!"

Yid said: "Why haven't we got any time if you have permits from the Kommandantura?"

Eve said: "I've never seen one."

"Why exactly are we in a hurry?" Yid asked.

"Tiny wants to be taken to the lavatory," said Goy.

"Sure," the man said. "If she must, she must. We'll wait." He had got up; he sat down again.

Yid said: "Eve wants to see the permits."

Eve said: "I've never seen the Commandant's signature."

The man looked at them with his laughing eyes. "Crazy kids," he said. "What are you up to?" He took out papers,

careless, and gave them to Eve to read. "Can you read?" he asked.

Eve seized them, greedy. "I am not good at these things," she said, searching them, helpless.

Yid half tore them out of her hands. "Permits," he said quietly. They both stared at those permits as if they were holy miracles.

"Eva Kaltengruber orphan, aged fifteen, Yizchok Yiddelbaum, orphan, aged——" His voice gave out.

Eve asked: "Is this the Commandant's name written here?"

"Yes," said Yid. "That's the Commandant's own name. Yes." He stroked over the papers with unsteady fingers. "Permits," he said very quietly.

"Yes," said Eve. "Look."

Yid said: "Yes." His face looked small under that bowler hat.

The man laughed. "If you have done with them, let me have them back." He took the papers and put them in his pocket; he said: "And now——"

Tiny came back with Goy.

"Good," said the man. "Now, quick!"

Goy said: "Got a present for you."

"You let me have it in the car," said the man, getting up, buttoning his leather coat. "We have no time to lose."

Goy said: "Can't. It's from the Collection."

"Why have we no time to lose," Yid asked.

Goy said: "It's from my Collection. You never looked at it, never."

"If we have no time to lose," Yid said, "let's get out of here quick."

"He never looked at my Collection," Goy said.

Yid was fidgety. "Did I leave my book collection behind? I did. So if you now with your collection——"

"He never looked at it," Goy said.

"Well," said the man gaily, and sat down. "I must look at it!"

"Let's get out of here!" Eve said.

The man shook his head. "Wouldn't do at all if I wasn't to look at that Collection. Goy! Bring it along!"

Yid said: "You said we have no time to lose."

"Because of the bloody long drive!" the man said. "Eighteen hours' drive at least."

"West?" said Yid. "Straight west through the town and the Salzburg road?"

"Goy," said the man. "Bring it along! What did you say? No, not through the town. Right over the bridge into the Russian Zone, and the northern road."

"Not through the town?" said Eve.

"Look," said Goy, dragging a box. "That's where I keep it. Nobody'd look for a Collection in this box. I must get the lid off with a knife."

"Do," said the man, sitting there broadly. "Do!"

"Or with a chisel," Goy said.

Eve said: "Is there a danger for you if they see you drive through the town? With us having permits and all?"

"Goy," said Yid. "Lord Jesus Christ, give me that chisel. I'll prise your box open for you in half a second. We have no time!" He opened the lid with one twist and jerk, and turned to the man, pale-faced. "Right into the Russian Zone, and the secondary road north of the river?" he asked quietly.

The man laughed. "Sure," he said. "Don't you know all the bridges are down on the Salzburg road?"

"Look," said Goy. "This is a Collection of the most beautiful things I have collected."

"Bridges down on the Salzburg road," Yid said quietly. "Do you know all the bridges are down behind all of us?"

"I know," said the man, nodding. "I know." He laid his arm round Yid's shoulder and held him close, just

for one moment, and let go again. He said gaily: "And now let's have a look at Goy's collection."

"Because," Yid said, "what we are leaving behind isn't nothing. A pull-water lavatory. Food cards."

"This is from swill bins what I found in the swill," said Goy. "A tin-opener. It isn't much; there is a better tin-opener farther down. With a little wheel!"

"Marvellous," said the man.

"But it's rusty," Goy said.

Eve said: "Did you say eighteen hours to the Swiss frontier?"

"We shan't drive right to the frontier," said the man.

"It's a bit rusty," he said, "but never mind! It is one of the swellest tin-openers I have ever seen."

"Not right to the frontier?" said Eve.

Goy said: "There is a better one farther down, a wheel tin-opener. And this is a bug-catcher."

"We ought to have been off and away half an hour ago," said Yid.

"A bug-catcher?" said the man. "I thought it was a cheese cloche, to keep flies away from your cheese. But—it's a good idea! You can use it as a bug-catcher; you're right!"

"Keep flies away from my cheese?" said Goy.

"Why don't we go right to the frontier?" said Eve. "Is there a danger for you if the frontier guards see us all?"

The man laughed. "Because I want you to see the world! I want you to see the high hills, and the sky, and snow. There is a hill there before we come to that frontier, higher than anything you have ever seen. Snow and ice and all. A glacier! And—and—ah, beautiful. We mustn't miss that hill!" He took out a map. "I got it here on my map. Here. It looks ever so beautiful for a hill walk."

Curly had come back from the yard. "Ice?" he said. "Is it cold there? Because I have radiators."

"Have you checked the tyres?" the man asked.

"A walk?" said Eve.

Goy said: "Hi, Smith. You looking at my Collection? This is a bug-catcher what is a cheese fly-catcher all in one for the two things. That's what it is, hi. You aren't looking at my Collection!"

"Oh, but I am," said the man. "It's magnificent; it's a hell of a fine collection; a *Gewalt* of a collection it is."

Yid said: "Secondary road through the Russian Zone. They aren't very wise on people from Vienna on a secondary road through the Russian Zone. Is that it?"

Goy said: "You can have it. I'll give you this bug-catcher as a present for you from my Collection. You can use it for cheese too if you like."

The man said: "Oh, this is very, very, very nice of you."

"Yes," said Goy.

The man said: "I'll keep it in great esteem."

"Yes," said Goy. "And for cheese too."

Curls said: "We could put at least one radiator on the luggage grid. Or three. There is enough time, because——"

"You like it, do you?" Goy said.

The man said: "I like it very much."

"Yes," said Goy.

The man said: "It won't do, putting those radiators on the luggage grid. Because of that walk we are going to have up that hill. It's a very big hill, you know. You wouldn't like carrying radiators up—oi, *Gewalt*, what a big hill that hill is."

Yid said: "We could have been across the Danube and in the other zone by now for the last thirty-five minutes."

"Carry them?" said Curls. "But we shan't need to carry them. We shall leave them in the jeep while we have that walk."

The man shook his head. "Oh no," he said gaily.

"Maybe we shan't go back to that jeep. Maybe we'll go down at the other side."

"Other side?" Yid said. He bent over the map Smith was still holding in his hand. He said quietly: "At the other side of that hill is Switzerland. So we'll be in Switzerland."

"So the frontier guards won't see you?" Eve asked.

The man slapped his forehead gaily. "I hadn't thought of that! Well, we'll have to say How-do-you-do to the frontier guards some other time!" He saw his gay effort drop into the black pools of their gaze, and sink, and leave no ripple. He turned to Curls, smiling. "Never you mind those radiators. You don't want them really. Didn't you say you had door-handles too? Take one handle, in your pocket, that's quite enough. From one single door handle you can build a whole new world."

"Think so?" said Curls, smiling. "Because there would be enough time, anyway, because——"

Yid said: "I'll tell you where you get off. You mustn't drive without a driver, as an officer. American Army regulations! Only if you're on leave and the car belongs to you."

"Is that so?" the man said gaily. "And what if a *Galach* isn't an officer, strictly speaking, or what if it so happens he is on forty-eight hours' leave since this morning, and—who knows? Maybe the car belongs to him and he paid for it?" He winked. "You forget somebody might have claimed a foreign service allowance for all the time back since——!"

Eve said: "Will they take you on in Switzerland, coming down that hill? An American clergyman with a crowd of kids?"

"Well," the man said gaily. "They will. I guess they will have to. I guess those kids will be in their country before they can be stopped. And I guess they wouldn't.

turn back a few orphan kids. Or I guess we shall have to—how shall I put it?”

“To lie,” Yid said. “To cheat. Why do you shirk the words? Which way do you want to cheat them?”

The man shook his head. “Not to cheat,” he said quietly. “I have—searched my heart. The means don’t matter. Cheat, you say. You win, call it cheating. Lying? Call it lying. I’d do more than just lying.” He fell silent.

Curls said: “Hi, sir.”

“A lie,” said the man. “Maybe I adopt you all? Or maybe—maybe Eve could be my fiancée and you others her relations?” He sat down heavily. He jumped up again a moment later. “We must leave,” he said, raucous. “Let’s go.”

“Say that again,” Eve said, voiceless. “What you said before.”

Curls said: “Hi, sir, couldn’t I please take at least one small radiator, and please one, just one a little bigger radiator, just at least to that stop, please, where we get out and leave the jeep? It’s a big jeep!”

“And the Collection,” Goy said. “Hi, Smith. And the bazooka.”

The man looked up. “Let’s go,” he said. “Let’s go now. Let’s go.”

Curls said: “Because there is time enough to take the radiator because the left back wheel is flat. We must change a wheel!”

Yid yelled: “Change a wheel! Why didn’t you say!” He was desperate, all of a sudden.

Curls said: “I tried to.” He started crying. “You all didn’t let me,” he said, sobbing. “I tried all the time.”

The man had jerked round, wild-eyed. Now he said, quiet, raucous: “Never mind, Curls. Don’t cry, chum. A few minutes. It doesn’t matter.”

Eve said: “Goy can change wheels like a flash. You

ought to see him liberate a wheel from a car when the driver just turns his back."

"Any wheel," Goy said. "Takes me a minute. Come along, Curls, help. One minute. I'll take the collection, too. Hi, Smith. And the bazooka."

The man sat down heavily. "All right," he said. "Change that wheel. Plenty of time. All right. A bazooka?" he said, wild-eyed. "All right then, take that bazooka! Maybe it'll come in handy, maybe, in a land like this, in a jungle like this. There hasn't been any shooting for too long. Take that bazooka; maybe there'll be wild beasts about!" Yes, he looked wild-eyed, and desperate. Laughing with desperation, he said: "Take that collection, all right, those radiators, take anything. Not a jungle—it is the flood! All of you, take what you like. Know the story of Noah's Ark? That jeep out there: it is Noah's Ark!"

Goy was visible outside, busy about the jeep.

"I'd better help him," Smith said, quiet again.

Eve said: "Leave it to him, Smith. He'll manage." She asked quietly: "Did you say you have a forty-eight hours' leave? And what then? You can't be back in forty-eight hours. I knew a fellow sent a telegram he was ill, so he got a prolongation."

"Don't worry," the man said, absent-minded, his eyes on the jeep outside. "I'll get all the prolongations in the world once I'm there. Don't you worry. Maybe I'll stay there for some time."

"Stay there as a *Galach*?" Eve asked.

"As a *Galach*," the man said, nodding, his eyes on the jeep outside. "But then again, why just as a *Galach*? You see, when I was a kid, long ago, such a real black dirty negro kid—first job I ever got was with a street-vendor. Water-melons. Know water-melons? There are water-melons down there—ah, beautiful. You put your teeth

into a two-pound slice of red, succulent—— and then again into a two-pound slice, and then again into—you can't stop eating. You get the belly ache in the end, but who minds a belly ache after such a melon! Now, that street-vendor was a white man, a Socialist. He talked Socialism. I don't know to this day if he was a street-vendor talking Socialism or a Socialist selling—you see, because you had to have some excuse in those days in the United States of America as a white man if you wanted to go into the back lanes and talk to negroes. Anyway. They clapped him into jail. I was left with the barrow and with the Socialism too, single-handed. How old was I? Seventeen? Eighteen. Can't have been much I had to tell! Anyway. Now what about that wheel; they fiddle about with that wheel and——”

“We ought to be gone,” Yid said. His eyes were desperate.

Eve said: “And?”

“And what?” said the man, his eyes on the jeep outside. “They took the barrow, of course. They wanted to take me, but I was a first-rate sprinter, so they took the barrow. No more melons. So I just talked Socialism to other negroes. Street corners, you know. Up on the soap box, and—— I had to be a very good sprinter, many times, oi, *Gewalt*, I had to be a good sprinter. For you see, we have the finest Constitution in the United States of America, but it's such a large country. That part where I was, New Carolina, Louisiana, Georgia—it's so far away from the Constitution! Odd. I didn't think of all that for years and years. Anyway. I got so sick and sick of having to be such a good sprinter that—you see, I found out that if you stand on a soap box talking Socialism the cops arrest you and beat you up or—they have a nice little club down there called the Ku-Klux-Klan, they just beat you up without arresting you. Or hang you. It all

depends. Anyway, I found out that if you stand on that self-same soap box and don't talk Socialism but Religion, if you don't say Engels and Marx but Our Lord Jesus Christ, and if you say the very same things just with the trade mark of the other firm, they don't touch you. So why not, I thought. For, you see, there isn't any difference, with the underdog, in those lower spheres. Rock bottom is rock bottom. Looking up from down there—a very far-away light. Which light? It doesn't matter. Only higher up, you know, the roads would branch, and branch off, and branch off and off. But down there, in the depths? So why not be a preacher for the Lord Jesus Christ, I thought. So I was a——” He rose, staring outside. “So I was a preacher,” he said, absent-minded. “Look,” he said, quiet, urgent. “Look. They can't do it. Look.”

Goy came up to the window. “No pressure,” he yelled. “Must pump!”

“Must pump,” the man said very quietly, standing there staring.

Eve said: “And?”

He did not listen, and stood there staring.

“And?” said Eve.

“And?” he said, absent-minded. “There is no And. That's the story. Street-corner preacher first. Lay preacher at evening prayers—no more soap box then. Then—we have spiritual gatherings, we negroes. Hymn-singing.” He sang: “Singing-singing. Sing-sing-singing singing. Oh my dear Lord Jesus singing singing singing,” he sang with his river voice. There he stood in that frozen basement, and was a broad river flowing under a foreign sky. It was funny. He fell silent, and stood there listening after his own voice that had long vanished. “Funny,” he said at last, quietly. “Not until I was twenty-five or so did I take up studying Divinity. As a profession. Then—well,

then it was a profession! Studying. Waiting. Praying. Preaching. Less praying and more preaching, as time went on. Then the first tiny little—Father Co-operator, it's called. It was then I started saving, I think. Two thousand one hundred and—how much? A profession—a professional. A living. Then I bought me a pair of spectacles, to hide my eyes behind them. That's all. That's my life. That's my bloody life and career for you. From water-melons to the Lord God Almighty. What was it you asked again? Shall I get a prolongation of my forty-eight hours' leave—was that it? Or shall I keep being a *Galach*? I'll be Noah, kid, sitting on the wheel of that jeep outside. Ever heard the story of Noah? He was a big noise when he set out, owning two thousand one hundred something, I am sure. After the flood he had to think of something new!" He stretched himself, a big animal. "Something. Anything. Anything! Sell water-melons, and be young again, and start from scratch, and——"

Curls came in. White-faced, he said: "Someone to see you."

Three

THE gent with the bowler hat turned up behind Curls a second later.

"You," said Smith, advancing against him slowly. "So it's you again, is it. If you don't get out of here at once, you stinking brute, you skunk, you God-damned——"

He did not complete the sentence. The bowler had sticulated off-stage—he wasn't the one to be addressed, he was just a minor extra, there was someone else who was the protagonist.

That other fellow, indeed, entered presently. "Oh,"

he said. Maybe he had heard the Reverend Smith's unfinished sentence. He was a Reverend himself, in uniform too, also American; he even wore spectacles with a gold rim. Indeed, he had much in common with him who had come before him to this locality. He was a white man, though; and older; and just one jump ahead in rank. He had a good head, really; full white hair, strong eyebrows, a high forehead, an eagle's nose. His mouth, though, was a bit small. "Oh," he said, round-mouthed, with lips too full; not a thinker's lips; eater's lips, rather. With your mind's eye, you'd see the calories march in through that orifice like Jews to a gassing plant. Though they were not gobbler's lips; just eater's lips. You'd trust them with having had just the regulation breakfast that morning—fruit juice, two eggs with a bit of steak, cereals, marmalade, butter, toast, rolls, and a smoke or two; just the regulation breakfast of the U.S. Army in Europe. No more. Just eater's lips. With your mind's eye you'd see them walk through the long danger list ward of a base hospital and address every single bed with a sincere and fluent individual sentence of good cheer or last consolation, as the case might be, before going off for lunch. And full white-haired, and a high forehead and fine, bold nose; not at all a bad head, really, if you didn't look too long. "Oh," he said, "my dear Reverend."

"Get out," the man Smith said quietly. He looked at the Reverend P. P. Trueslove, from Chicago, and at the man in the bowler hat, and said: "Get out, both of you."

The one from Chicago said: "I have come as a friend. I'm going to accompany you back to your quarters, Reverend."

Smith said: "Reverend. This isn't your bloody business." He looked at him, and looked at the bowler, who stepped back, two steps, just out of reach.

The Rev. Trueslove said: "Now this is where you are wrong, Reverend. I have a moral mission to——"

"Now listen," Smith said quietly. "I want to get out there into that jeep, with these kids. I give you——"

"Don't!" said Chicago. "Don't! Friend! Don't!"

"I give you," Smith said quietly, "ten seconds to step out of my way." His voice rose. "And if you don't step out of my way, man, I swear——!"

"Don't," the Rev. Trueslove said; now he shrugged his shoulders. He said: "Don't use force, Reverend!"

"One," said Smith. "Two seconds. Three, four, five."

The other man withdrew, walking backwards. He shrugged his shoulders, and waved off-stage. "It's just for your best," he said. "To save you from the consequences of rash action." He turned to somebody who was out of sight, waving him nearer.

It was two of them. They did not really step close. Just turned up, outside in the yard, and stood there, leisurely. White-helmeted. Military police.

"Just to save you from the consequences," said the Reverend P. P. Trueslove without triumph.

Smith looked at him, and looked at the white helmets, and looked at him. "Am I under arrest?" he asked quietly.

"You choose to express yourself somewhat bluntly," said the Rev. Trueslove. "It will be to the better advantage of our cloth, of both our cloths, as officers and as priests——"

"Priests?" Smith said. "What wrong have I done as a priest?"

"Blunt again," said the other man. "You will forgive me the criticism, considering—— No, I don't want to dwell on our little difference in rank. Nor on our difference in—— No, now you offend me, Reverend, you think I propose to dwell on some other difference! I beseech you never to think of it. Though, you know—where do you

hail from? Georgia, Louisiana? You see, life in the big cities makes you so much older. Quite apart from my seniority in years. You will forgive me, then? Reverend, you are blunt! What have you done wrong as a priest, you really ask that while——” He interrupted himself, and turned to the bowler hat, and said: “Would you mind leaving us alone for a minute, friend? And maybe you would be so kind as to take these young people along, just outside to the courtyard? Thanks, my friend, thanks!” He turned to Smith, his voice dry. “And now——”

“Look,” said Smith.

“Pardon me,” said the other man. “Reverend, maybe you had better leave me the floor for a minute, now, as we are without witnesses. What have you done wrong as a priest, you asked—in presence, in the very presence of the young harlot with whom you are debasing yourself?”

Smith opened his mouth. But he changed his mind, he did not say anything. He just looked at the other man. “Is that it?” he asked at last, quietly. “Debasing myself with the harlot? That’s why——” He did a gesture, embracing the courtyard outside, and the man in the bowler hat, and the men in white helmets, and the Reverend P. P. Trueslove in person. “That’s why this whole show is being staged—just because you think I have fallen in with a whore?”

“Just?” said Trueslove. “You have peculiar standards, using the term ‘just,’ if I may say so as your elder. Anyway, *we* don’t use the term ‘just’ in connection with a misdemeanour by a priest, by a United States Army chaplain, in occupied territory, with a local prostitute.”

Smith laughed quietly. “That a police job?” he asked. “‘We’ take exception? ‘We’ call in the police?”

“You are wrong again,” said the other man. “It is the Commanding Officer, U.S. Forces, who called in both the police and myself. On information laid against you

by—well, there is no secret in that, I suppose. The gentleman in the stiff hat outside laid information against you. Associating with a common prostitute, contravention of non-fraternization orders, obstruction of a warrant for guardianship of a minor, referring I suppose to one of those other juveniles, and—and using force! Throwing a missile, a—a——”

“A brick,” Smith helped him out, laughing quietly. “So the Commanding Officer sent the police to arrest me for——”

“He sent *me*,” the Rev. Trueslove corrected. “On my very earnest request. To safeguard the reputation of the Army Chaplains’ Corps. Of our cloth. And of our Church. Those policemen ought not to have come into the picture at all if——”

“If I’d come quiet?”

“Blunt again,” said the Reverend Trueslove from Chicago. “They were just to keep at a distance. I never thought I would have to call them in.” He went on, not without warmth: “Man, do you not realize what you are doing to yourself, to your position, to your career? You have got a living somewhere back home, I suppose: what will become of it if the military report the matter to your Bishop? Have you gone crazy? I am not a Pharisee. Any man would have his moments of—of weakness. Garment or no garment. But do you not see that the game is up? You must make a clean cut between yourself and that rabble, and—my friend! The C.O. is a reasonable man, a fine type indeed, and you can rely on my brotherly support, for quite a variety of reasons. If you come right now, I can tell him that everything is over and settled. He will accept your explanations and—what will he do? Fortnight’s confinement to barracks. Post you to some other unit. That will be all. Reverend! We all want to help you out of this!”

Smith looked at him fixedly. "And these children?" he asked quietly.

The Reverend Trueslove shrugged his shoulders. "If you insist—but I would not if I were you, Reverend. But still, if you insist on saying goodbye to them right now before you——"

Smith nodded. "Yes," he said. "I'll say goodbye. I'll come quiet then. Give me ten minutes. Five minutes? All right then, call them in, not just the girl, that Yid boy too."

"You want to talk to them alone?" said Trueslove. "Do you not think that my presence——"

Smith looked at him, wild-eyed, silent.

Trueslove shrugged his shoulders. "All right," he said. "Five minutes. As you please."

He went out into the yard.

Yid came in, Eve.

"What are they doing to you?" said Eve.

"Nothing," Smith said, stroking her hand. "They are grudging me your friendship, Eve."

Yid nodded. "I thought as much," he said drily.

Smith said: "Now listen, kids. I have five minutes, no more. Listen. I'll be held up, for a week, or for a fortnight. No, don't get excited, Eve. Maybe I'll be held up just for a day or two. Explanations, you know. Interviews. Nothing serious at all, how should there be, there was nothing of the sort they think, after all, was there? I didn't dream of—ah, stop me talking nonsense. I'll be held up. But you mustn't be held up. Here are your papers—here, the travel permits you admired so much, you two. The moment I am gone with those fellows, you beat it. Go! At once. Understand? At once! You beat it, hell, do you understand? You must be over the bridge and in the Russian Zone at once!"

Eve looked at him with wide, frightened eyes. Yid nodded, silent.

"Good," the man said, and went on at great speed: "Now listen. You can't use the jeep, of course. Can't drive in a jeep, can you—just kids. So that part of the plan is a washout. Never mind. Or, rather, Curls will mind, with his radiators. And Goy will mind. I am desperate I can't prevent them having the disappointment. You break it to them, they'll have to leave their things behind, but I'll buy others for them when I join you in Switzerland in a week or two."

"Join us in Switzerland?" Eve said.

"Or in a day or two," said Smith, laughing lightly. "Why, what do you think? I'll come after you like a flash, the moment I have settled this with the C.O. The one thing that matters is you make your way into the Russian Zone, and straight West as far as you can go and then right across into Switzerland, right away, any way, at any cost. And I'd break up the party if I were you, it's so much easier to get along if you—if you——"

"I understand," Yid said, nodding.

Smith said: "The great thing is you get away right now at any cost."

"At any cost?" Yid asked.

Smith took out his pocket book. "Look," he said. "I am getting new money next—is it next Monday? So you can take all I have. It ought to get you through everywhere. All of you. You'll be very clever about it, won't you, and wise, and grown-up? For it isn't much! It's just all I happen to have just now. Here. Three thousand four hundred dollars."

Eve looked at him, wide-eyed.

"You'd better split it between the two of you," Smith said, fidgety.

Eve said: "You said you had only—— And you bought all those things!"

"You forget those foreign service allowances and all," said Smith.

Yid had said nothing. Now he said: "It's mighty fine of you, Smith, but it can't be done. You think it's our luck they picked on you on a dud charge. Now your philosophy is they won't find out against you on a real charge for another few hours or for a day or two days, and meanwhile we'll be gone. That's your *Galach* philosophy. It can't be done, Smith. If we go, we must go on the Kommandantura permits, otherwise we can't get anywhere. Now listen. You couldn't get the permits for us, so you faked the signature. No, let me finish! They'll put you in jail and ruin you if they find out about your faked permits. These permits must not be used, that's all. If we tear up the permits, what can they do to you? Nothing." His face looked white and small and desperate under the bowler hat. "But it was mighty fine of you to have faked them for us, Smith," he said with a little smile.

"You faked them for us?" said Eve.

Yid said, with a small voice: "Don't worry about us, Smith. What can they do to us? Nothing. What can happen to us? Nothing. We'll just stay." He looked about himself and said with a little gesture: "We have quite a fine place!"

Smith said: "Oh God," he said. "Oh hell. Oh bloody *Gewalt*," he said. "Oh you bloody fool; a fat lot it will help me if you don't use those permits—because of a question of a little signature. If, I say, *if* it wasn't a genuine signature. How do you know they won't rope me in anyway, for something else?"

"What for?" Eve asked quickly. Her eyes were frightened.

"Something," said Smith. "Anything. How am I to know? What if—just for the sake of argument! What if—I don't know! Maybe they'll feel I oughtn't to have taken

those knickers for Eve, or that—why, anything. Maybe they'll say I oughtn't to have given you a chit with my name to get a coat for you. Ah, hell and hell and bloody hell, and if you don't let me have my way and let me go with them and if you don't beat it the moment I'm gone——”

“The *Galach*,” said Eve.

There he was all right. He had come back, noiseless. The Reverend P. P. Trueslove from Chicago. He said: “It is nearly ten minutes, Reverend.” Eve stood in his way. He walked round her as if she was plague and pox in person. “Reverend,” he said, “I expect you have finished with this.”

Yid said: “Nearly. I was just confessing. Because, you know, he converted me to the Christian Goyish faith.”

“Oh,” said Rev. Trueslove.

“But it's nearly over,” Yid said. “Another two minutes at most.”

The Reverend Trueslove said: “As the Reverend Smith and myself are both Servants of the Lord, maybe, my friend, you will not object to my presence.”

“Sure,” said Yid. “Not object at all. I was just confessing I fooled him, fair and square, he thought he was converting me to the Lord and what-not, but I just took the chance with both hands and——”

“Stop!” said Smith. “You idiot, if you don't——”

“Reverend!” said Trueslove at the same time. “Let him go ahead!”

“With both hands,” Yid said, louder, “and made a fool of this here *Galach*. My God, what a fool he is. My Lord Jesus Christ, he is such a bloody fool. He thought I was interested in bloody Jesus—in fact I was interested in liberating a bloody American parachute for this girl here who is my bride. I have liberated six American rain-coats for the six of us! On my way to his room in the

American camp I sneaked into the women's stores and liberated a pair of ladies' knickers. I liberated——"

"Stop," Smith yelled.

"And this fool," Yid over-yelled him, "this bloody fool thinking I was interested in bloody Christ!" Tears were in his eyes, suddenly, in that face of his under that bowler hat.

Smith yelled: "I took those knickers! I took those knickers!"

"Reverend," said the Reverend Trueslove, taking him by the arm, not without Christian brotherliness. "Reverend, you are probably running a temperature."

"I stole those knickers," Smith said, almost voiceless. "I did all those things. I did more. Those kids couldn't do a thing. What could such kids do? Look at them! But I did more. Wait. I'll show you my cheque book and——" He reached for his pocket book with a fumbling movement. "I'll show you my cheque book and a few papers and permits and you'll see——" He fumbled for his pocket book. "Then you'll see——"

"Reverend," said the Reverend Trueslove. "Brother."

"I can't find my pocket book," Smith said, desperate.

"Here you are," said Yid, and took it out of his own pocket. His face was white.

"Well," said Trueslove, taking the pocket book with two fingers and handing it on to Smith. "That is that. Reverend! Don't you see you have been taken advantage of? Only by the mercy of our Lord, who moved this fellow's wicked heart to confess——"

"Sir," said Yid, "I am feeling a bit—I am afraid I must go to some place, you know. Let's get over this quick. Here are three thousand four hundred dollars——"

"I drew them," Smith said. "I had nothing left on my account, but I drew——"

"I drew," said Yid. "I faked his signature. Nobody can

tell me about signatures. There isn't a signature in the world I can't fake." He looked at Smith, scornful. "Bloody amateur." And took out a chit, a permit to buy an overcoat, and handed it to the Reverend Trueslove of Chicago, and said: "Here. That's how I do his signature. He is just a fool."

Trueslove took the chit with two fingers and looked at it through his gold-rimmed spectacles. "Brother," he said, "you have been shamelessly taken in by a gang of young criminals."

Yid said: "So that's settled now, isn't it?" His face was very white. "I'm—off. Just to my—I thought I'd got over it, but here it is again. It's just diarrhoea. Just to my—to my study."

Eve had stood there motionless. Trueslove said: "Your friend seems to be unwell, young lady."

"Yes," she said quietly, and took Yid's arm and went out with him. The Rev. Trueslove stepped out of her way as if she was the pox.

"Reverend Smith," he said, "you have been saved by a miracle of our Lord. We shall spread the mantle of Christian forgetfulness over this incident. We shall not want any further explanations. As your senior officer, and on orders of the officer in command, I request you——" He checked himself. "No, I do not request you, Reverend Smith," he said in an altered voice, not without warmth. "I beseech you for your forgiveness if I showed myself lacking in humility. You shall join me in prayer once this is over! I see what happened. You are—in all humility, my friend—you are a man from the backwoods. It won't offend you if I call you—shall we say, naive? I can make a shrewd guess what happened. You came, and wanted to take up contacts. With whom? With the elements of law and order and continuity which deserve support? Or

with men of our own calling, who have and always had a stake in this country? Or with—for I for one do not care a dime if a man served the Nazis, within limits, as long as he stands for authority and against the menace of—politics. We are not political! But you, Reverend, choose to come—here. You came, and saw, and were vanquished. Not by the girl; I am not narrow; by the whole set-up. Am I right? I respect you for it, too. I was a romantic myself, in my time. I am no longer. When I was twenty or twenty-one, I actually went about—there was a shack district outside Chicago in those days, shacks built of empty tins, with a piece of corrugated iron as a roof, and with lice and bugs and—good Lord. Immigrants, you know; and hoboes; people of colour too, my brother. And I went about the place every first of the month distributing half of the monthly cheque I got from home. Cashed it at the bankers, and went straight out to the slum! And what did I get? Souls for the Lord? No, my friend. I got lice and bugs. I am a romantic no longer. Hardened? Hard? Brother, we ought to have a talk one of these long evenings about how hardness fits in with humanity. Is not our Church human? But it is hard! Our very faith is hard. Because life is hard. It is the hardness of living faith. I have given a great deal of thought to it. Not a rock's hardness, but the hardness of tempered steel. We must have a long talk about it. So much about hardness, for the moment. I would wish you to realize that I am neither a Grand Inquisitor all out to burn you or anyone at the stake, in these streamlined times, nor am I a sentimental fool either. I heard what that Jew boy said. He lied, of course. He went all out to make the wall for you—as they call it at the Federal Prison back home where I make a point of acting as a confessor to condemned men whenever I can spare an hour from my engagements in the parish. The young fellow shielded

you, and you shielded him, and you lied too, my friend. I owe it to you in all Christian humility to speak out that I know that, and that I know there is something fishy about it all, but I am just not interested! Not because I am soft, but because I am sober. We have come here to this continent on a job; you and I. If I were narrow, I would say now that our job is to look after the spiritual welfare of so many men of our Army units. I am not that narrow either. We have a mission! We have come to teach these people here a number of definite, clear-cut, very sober lessons. We have come as conquerors, all right, but we stay as educators. Lesson One: Nazism is Crime. Lesson Two: Crime doesn't pay—no crime, no sort of crime, neither black market deals nor prostitution nor werewolfing nor anything. Lesson Three: Overfeeding them would be paying them and spoiling that lesson. Reverend, we Americans are the most soft-hearted people in the world, and the most selfless people really; we would give away our very shirts, and we are the most modest people—in fact, our modesty is our one great vice, for we are the grandest people in the world, Reverend, and you can ask our doctors and scientists: we are just barely fed! We must not underfeed! Self-preservation of this greatest people for the future of mankind is our sacred trust! That was Lesson Three. Lesson Four: Our other sacred trust, our American way of life, as, for instance, set out in the Atlantic Charter——” He stopped, and asked: “Why do you laugh?”

Yes, there sat the Reverend Hoseah Washington Smith—he had sat down again heavily on that bench, legs apart, a plantation labourer come home from a heavy job in the cotton fields—there he sat, and laughed quietly. He said: “Oh, nothing. It just crossed my mind. Atlantic Charter. That Yid boy can recite it to you backwards if you like. Forwards and backwards.”

"It is not a matter of reciting it," Trueslove said, irritated. "It is a matter of——"

"Oh, I know," Smith interrupted him. "Oh, skip it. No, I don't want to ridicule you. Maybe you are even sincere, or think you are. After all, I was all of your opinion a mere——" He passed his heavy hand over his eyes as if to wipe away something invisible. "Ghoulish," he said quietly. "It is ghoulish. A mere three days ago I'd have used your very words. I'd have produced the same drivel. No offence meant, Reverend. Do you know I came here, down here to this place to distribute—what? I give you three guesses. Some of that bread you said we can't spare? Cod-liver oil, eh? Insect powder, soap, what? Or some drugs for the spotted fever and gonorrhoea and pox and plague that tear at their bowels? Wrong again. I came with tracts. 'Arise, ye starvelings'? Oh no. Other tracts. You guessed it. Go to Church and love the democratic way of life and leave the rest to the Lord God Almighty and His Allied Military Government." He laughed quietly. "You said you were my elder. That was correct three days ago. I am so much older than you now—I can't count the years."

"Love," said the other man, "Love must not be devoid of justice. And justice—we must have a long talk about it one of these evenings. I might even base next Sunday's sermon on it: Justice must not be devoid of memory. Justice is memory. Lest we forget. They asked for it, did they not. They are butcher birds. They are born killers. They started killing—shall I give you lectures on history? Once a killer, always a killer. Or do you mean because they are beaten to the ground just now, and live as they live? Believe me——" He let his gold-rim spectacled eyes pass over the smashed-up place. "When I tried to persuade some of those people way back at Chicago to leave their shacks of rusty iron and move to some decent

hostel—I even offered to pay for a cab for them, I remember, from my meagre monthly cheque, what with the man being half paralysed and the woman in an advanced stage of pregnancy. But they wouldn't go, they wouldn't leave that shack! Same here. You must never judge them on your own standards. They like living in places like this. Move them to the Imperial Hotel—quite apart from what they would do to the bathrooms." He went on, in controlled irritation: "You are laughing again."

"Sorry," said Smith. "Just something that crossed my mind. A silly professional habit I used to pride myself on. Short cut through irrelevant prattle, I used to think. Getting down to brass tacks right away. I was mighty proud of it. Later—churchman's routine, a parrot's cry, but I was still proud of it. Vanity of a licensed retailer of the Lord's holy heart. So I got used to starting conversations that way, with that question. Maybe it is good enough to finish ours—it crossed my mind."

"Which question?" asked the Rev. Trueslove.

"Do you believe in God?"

The man's face reddened. "I am coming to the conclusion, Reverend Smith," he said, "that after all my conception of the Lord is not yours. Yours is somewhat alien to me. Somewhat alien altogether. Strangely—different. No, I ought not to have said that in wrath. Forgive, my friend. I said it to hurt you. Let us join in prayer." He closed his eyes, he bent his head, and stood silent, his eater's lips moving, inaudible.

Smith said: "No, don't worry. Also, how can we join in prayer, as we do not pray to the same God?" He rose heavily, he too stood there praying, it was funny to look how they stood there, two *Galachs*, and both wearing the same uniform, and the Rev. Smith standing there with grey hair untidy, with closed eyes, a nigger, and swaying as if he was drunk.

Oh my Lord God, he prayed, oh my Lord Jesus! They asked for it, that there Reverend says, but did they? Did Yizchok Yiddelbaum ask for it? Did Eve Kaltenbrunner or what's her name ask for it? Did the kid with the balloon belly? Or if it is a matter of the child being smitten for father's sin, did Herr Yiddelbaum senior ask for it when they hanged him at Bialystok? Did Frau Curls—I don't know her name—ask for it when the Poles liberated her? And if they did ask for it, these kids I mean, and are guilty by some refinement of your moral machinery a coloured man like myself wouldn't understand, and if they are as guilty as I think they are guiltless: so what, my Lord? What do you want them to do? Repent? My Lord, they are too hungry to repent, my Lord Jesus Christ. They are too lice-ridden and too bug-ridden and they are too frost-ridden and disease-ridden and ridden altogether to say a single fifty words' prayer to your greater glory.

"A hymn?" said Trueslove, who had finished with praying. "Is that a hymn you are humming, brother?"

"Yes," said Smith. "A hymn."

Trueslove said: "Which?"

"You wouldn't know it," said Smith.

Trueslove said: "We must go now. I must get this over. I have an appointment for lunch." He was impatient. He asked aggressively: "You finished hymn-singing?"

Smith hummed: "They are too lice-ridden, Lord, and too bug-ridden, Lord, and they are too frost-ridden, Lord, and disease-ridden, Lord, and ridden altogether to repent, my dear Lamb, Jesus." He laughed quietly. "Know the hymn?"

"I know," Trueslove said, flushing, "that my patience is at an end. I will tolerate a lot, but not blasphemy. I wanted to save you the degradation of a formal arrest." He signed to the policemen outside. They strolled in slowly.

Smith said: "But they will rise! Hosts and legions of

them and millions and millions of them I can see rise for a great day of resurrection."

"I know," said Trueslove. "Now listen. It's twelve-twenty-five now. I have a lunch at one sharp."

"Resurrection," said Smith, louder. "I can see them rise, an army a hundredfold more terrible than those slain in battle. Kids with blown bellies. Kids with smashed heads, with torn-off limbs, with blue tongues sticking out of their gaping mouths, as they dragged them from the gas vans and threw them into the nearest pit."

"Nigger revivalist," one of the cops said to Trueslove evenly. "I've had them before."

"Kids," Smith shouted, "rotting without eyes, with maggots dropping from their sockets. But they will rise! That will be the great day of reckoning!"

"Now, there is only one thing I want to know," said the other cop. "Will he come quiet?"

Trueslove shrugged his shoulders and stepped aside.

Smith yelled: "It will be the great ghost army of reckoning, and there will be no difference to be seen between those slain by Nazi bullet or Allied bomb, there will be no difference between German plague or Russian or Polish plague, there will be no difference for a soldier of that army of reckoning if he froze to death or died of hunger in the winter of tyranny or in the winter of liberation." He shook off the cop's hand and yelled: "*Dies irae dies illa solvet saeculum in favilla!*" He looked about him, wild-eyed. He seized those bars and distinctions of an officer sewn to his uniform and tore them off, one by one, silent.

"You're mad," Trueslove said quietly.

Smith tore off his clergyman's crosses from the lapels, wordless.

"That's better now," said the Cop. They stepped up close to him.

Trueslove said: "That must not have happened! That must not have happened!"

"I'll come quiet," Smith said hoarsely. And to Yid, who had come in with Eve in the policemen's wake: "Where are the others?"

"They're all right," Yid said. "Don't worry."

"And you?" Smith asked.

Eve said: "We are fine."

Smith said: "I'm sorry I let you down after all."

"Never mind," Yid said. "We'll manage." His face looked small under his bowler hat. "I have figured it all out," he said quietly. "We'll have a bar here, and—and a bargain sales' shop, and—ah, many things."

"Yes," said Eve.

Smith said: "Yes."

"That'll be tremendous," Yid said.

"And a bar, too," Eve said. "Drinks, and—and dancing, and drinks."

"That'll be fine," Smith said.

Yid said: "And the pull-water lavatory. There isn't another bar with a pull-water lavatory in all Austria. We'll ask a half a schilling or a half a something from everybody to let them in."

"Say that about the circus," Eve said.

"Yes," said Yid. "I haven't finished yet. I am still thinking. A flea circus. Tremendous. And we can always fall back on the pull-water lavatory, too."

"That'll be fine," said Eve. "Oh, we'll be fine."

"Yes," said Smith, standing there between the two cops. "Oh, I don't worry. You'll be fine."

"Yes," Yid said.

The Reverend Trueslove said: "Look here, young friend. I want to be charitable, in spite of—I have decided to do something for you. You may call on me to-morrow. I shall introduce you to our Intelligence

Officer. You are clever. He will have a job for you."

"No, thanks," Yid said, and looked past him, and looked at Smith.

The Reverend Trueslove said: "Some information, that is all he will want, from time to time. Your circles and—and some other people need never know. Proving your gratitude for your liberation by giving us regular confidential information!" He blushed.

Yid looked right through him, and looked at Smith, and did not reply.

"Twelve thirty-two," said the Reverend P. P. Trueslove from Chicago. He had blushed deeply.

Yid said: "I have a gift for you, Smith." He had taken off his tie and held it out in an outstretched hand.

"Oh, that's very, very kind of you," Smith said.

"Stalin," Yid said, "Stalin hasn't got just such a spotted tie."

"He hasn't," said Smith. "It is a *Gewalt* tie. I'm so moved I can't tell you how moved I am. I'll wear it on Sundays only, when I preach in church, in case they allow me to preach in church."

"Yes," Yid said quietly.

"Well," said Smith gaily, "I guess I must go now."

Eve said: "I have a confession. Don't go yet. I made you all sorts of confessions, but not this one."

"You can go to church for it next Sunday," said Trueslove. "It's twelve thirty-five."

Eve said: "It's a very short confession. I don't mind those fellows listening."

"Hurry up, then," Trueslove said. "Thirty seconds."

Eve said: "We used to share out food when there was some, each the same share, you know, so all thought I had the same share too, but a bloke, a flying officer, gave me a package of sour sweets from the canteen, and I hid it

and didn't tell the others, and I always ate a sweet in my cupboard every day or sometimes two a day and didn't tell them, and now they're all gone and I didn't confess it to you yesterday because I still had two sweets left and now they're all gone."

"That all?" said Smith.

Eve said: "And maybe they would have saved Tiny's little brother when he died last week."

"Never mind," said Smith. "He'll come again."

"What'ye mean, come again?" Yid said.

Smith said: "He'll rise again! You'll all rise again!" He freed himself from the cops gently, and stepped close to Eve. Gently, he kissed her on the forehead. "That's the Lord's forgiveness," he said. "Goodbye."

"Goodbye," she said.

Smith said: "That reminds me, Yid. It's my—my duty, I guess. If you are in earnest about your conversion——"

Yid shook his head. "What for?" he said quietly. "That was for Switzerland—Jesus Christ and all that. But for the occupied zone?"

Smith nodded. "Well, then," he said. "Though I'd have liked to say goodbye to the others, to all of them. To Ate."

"Ate is all right," said Eve.

Smith said: "And Tiny, and——"

"She is fine, Tiny is," Eve said. "Don't worry."

"And you, Eve," Smith said. "And you."

"I?" Eve said. "Oh, I am fine, Smith. Don't worry."

Smith said: "Was there anything more you wanted to say to me, Eve?"

"Nothing," Eve said. "Nothing."

"Goodbye, Smith," said Yid.

"Nothing?" Smith said.

"Nothing," said Eve. "Nothing, Smith. Goodbye. Smith. I'm fine!"

"Yes," Smith said. "Goodbye!"

Eve said: "Goodbye!"

They stood alone in the basement a minute later.

Eve said: "Goodbye!"

Four

"TINY?" said Eve.

Yid said: "No. He couldn't see her. She is round at the back."

"What made her so much worse?" she asked. "Curls?"

He nodded. "When they took Curls away on the warrant." He paused. "He couldn't see. Smith, I mean."

Eve asked: "What will they do to him?"

"To Curls?" said Yid. "Nothing. They'll put him in a camp. He'll escape. Then they'll put him in a camp. Then he'll escape. Then they'll put him in a camp. The bowler has nothing against him, really. All he wants is the guardianship to get this house; that's his philosophy." He paused. "Maybe he'll throw us out from here?"

"Oh no," she said lightly. "He talked to me. He won't throw us out." She paused. "He's got a collection, he told me. He is a collector. Black Market food-tin collection; one tin of each, you know. At his house. I can come and look at it, he said, to-morrow night."

"Yes," said Yid.

"He won't throw us out," Eve said lightly.

Yid said lightly: "Oh, he won't throw us out." He paused. "That other *Galach*, Trueslove—I've got his pocket book." He took it out of his trouser leg. "It's for you, Eve. A present."

"Marvellous," she said.

He said: "It's for you. I haven't even opened it."

"It's terribly kind of you," she said. She opened it. "There isn't much money in it, but never mind! Two dollars, four dollars, that's the lot. What's that? Just papers, a letter probably. Look."

"Let me see," said Yid. "It's a speech! Do you know what it is? It's the order of the day, or what you call it, he wants to issue in church next Sunday."

"That's all there is in his wallet," she said. "But it's marvellous, all the same, you can do the trick again."

"Yes," he said.

"Look," she said. "Let me see—yes! There is another pocket in this wallet. What's in here?" She took it out. "A French letter," she said.

"Yes," he said.

She said: "But it's marvellous all the same."

They were still standing where they had stood, just two kids, and his face small under his bowler hat.

"Ate," said Eve. "Ate's coming. Look. With two—not with two Russians? She wouldn't talk to Russians!" She said: "Hullo, Ate."

Ate looked through them, saying nothing. She looked frozen. Her eyes looked frozen. But the Russians were nice Russians, like big pups. Their uniforms were thin, but they didn't care, they were so proud of them. And gay; and strong; and serious; and gay. One of them was a subaltern, the other was a soldier; they were both very young.

The soldier said nothing. Ate nodded to him, blue-icy-eyed, and they went out back. The subaltern stepped up to Eve and Yid and said: "Good morning, citizens. How many of you are living here? Six, I hear. The room is adequate, but in our cities the heating system would be more efficient, and the entrance door ought to be in the opposite corner. We Soviet men shall assist your nation

with our planning architects; we have no feelings of revenge against your nation—we have liberated you from the Fascist beasts!”

“Yes,” said Eve.

The Russian said: “Citizens, how many illiterates are there among you? Which of you is responsible for the statistical analysis of your present position? Why don’t you convene a meeting and elect representatives? What is wrong with you is that capitalist bondage is still in your blood. You have allowed the Fascist monsters to destroy your city as they retreated, without raising a hand against them to preserve your industrial potential and amenities.” He turned to Yid: “It would have been your duty to organize partisan activity behind the Fascist lines to defend the optical industry! Had you had the educational benefits of a Soviet citizen you would deserve to be court-martialled.”

“Yes,” said Yid.

The Russian said: “It is our way to speak out straightforwardly and openly. Nothing will be done to you as it is. On the contrary. We would be entitled to seize your potato stores; they are German potatoes, legitimate booty of war, but Comrade Stalin gives you fifty per cent. of them as a gift!”

“Fine,” said Yid.

The Russian turned to Eve. “We want you to learn the lesson, citizen,” he said warmly.

“Yes,” said Eve.

The Russian said: “When your Fascist hordes invaded our Soviet country they destroyed everything. Everything. *They* did not leave any fifty per cent. of the potatoes to Soviet man! *We* don’t destroy—we build. There is the unveiling ceremony of the Soldier Liberator Monument just now, executed by Honoured People’s Artist Agrobachajev; Comrade Stalin’s gift to your town! Our

military technicians are working this very moment at the restoration of the footbridge across the Canal; there will be an opening ceremony next week in the presence of Russian and Allied generals! At the same time——”

He stopped to listen to some hammering outside, where Ate and the soldier had disappeared. “At the same time,” he went on, “you must appreciate our vigilance. Who liberated this city? We. With whose blood are these streets soaked? Our soldiers’. But who moved in after the work was done? Though we do not grudge it our Western allies. You want for yourselves the well-preserved sections of the city and leave us the rubble? All right, all right! It might invite sinister interpretations that they chose just the good parts. But Soviet man is magnanimous. All right, ally, have the good parts, have all the amenities. But of your plenty, of what you do not really need—according to the Potsdam Declaration, we have a solemn legal claim to twenty-five per cent. of those redundant amenities!”

He interrupted himself. The soldier had reappeared. He carried a lavatory seat under his arm, he carried a whole dismantled lavatory on his broad shoulders. Ate came after him, frozen, wordless.

Nodding towards her, the subaltern said: “It is regrettable that only one in six of you was upright enough to inform us of the existence of this redundant amenity. Our Western allies hold up all ships upstream, they don’t allow a single truck to cross into our zone, they wrap every single Fascist in cottonwool—they try to bribe their way into popularity—they build up a zone of influence! Why do our Western allies curry favour with the local population, conspiring with them to conceal redundant amenities that legally belong to us, while we on our side——!”

“Yes,” said Yid. “Oh yes.”

The subaltern said: “We Soviet men must be vigilant.

We must never forget of our own country. There is something very exalted in our emotions for our country, which represents one-sixth of the continental mass of this planet. You cannot be blamed, citizens, for having been deprived by your Fascist slave-drivers of the educational standards to appreciate the sublime yet heroic tenderness of our emotions for our Socialist fatherland."

The soldier had crossed the room heavily, and gone out with his load to where was probably a cart.

"Citizens," said the subaltern, standing near the exit, "maybe it will shake you out of your political obtuseness: Just think of it! Maybe this amenity will have its place in a workers' centre at destroyed Sebastopol!"

He went out, saluting. Ate lagged behind, icy-eyed. "I had to tell them, hadn't I," she said, toneless. "They are the authorities. I was always first." She went out after them, stumbling, as if she was walking in her sleep.

"Yes," said Yid quietly.

Eve said: "That just about settles it."

Yid was still standing there, motionless. He said: "But he was right! I ought to have stopped the Fascist beasts and saved the optical industry!"

Eve said: "No lavatory, no bar. That just about settles it." She did some small steps to the window to look outside. "Goy is going with the Russians," she said quietly. "Is he leaving Tiny?"

"I wouldn't worry about Tiny," Yid said lightly.

Eve said: "He is taking the dog along. What does he want the dog for?"

Yid said nothing.

Eve said: "Don't be so damned silent. There is still the two of us."

"Yes," said Yid.

Eve said: "I can go in for professional."

"Or that flea circus," said Yid. "Tremendous."

Eve said: "Or I can go in for professional, you helping me."

"Yes," said Yid. "Oh yes."

"Yid," Eve said. "What are they doing to us?"

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing."

His face looked small under the bowler hat. He stood there listening.

A barrel organ had started somewhere.

Next day, when the gent with the cigar went down to inspect the house, being the legal guardian of the owner's son, he found a corpse. It was a former S.S. man known as the Baker, wearing a fancy outfit of pieces of British and American uniforms. He seemed to have come down in the course of the night, dead drunk, with a gun, after a tart, maybe. Then someone stopped him.

There was also some dead kid lying in a hand-cart, covered with newspaper. But it was just dead; it had just died, as kids do.

There was no one else in that basement when the gent with the cigar came down.

■

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